Veronica

by

Johanna Spyri

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VERONICA

—Frontispiece

"STICK TO THAT, MY BOY," SAID THE DOCTOR, AND DROVE AWAY

VERONICA

BY

JOHANNA SPYRI

(Author of "Heidi" & "Gritli's Children.")

Translated by

LOUISE BROOKS

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers

NEW YORK

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29365

Copyright, 1886, by
LOUISE BROOKS
Published 1924, by
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America

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VERONICA.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT TO THE DOCTOR.

It was early in the month of March. The dark blue vault of heaven lay over mountain and valley, swept free from clouds by the keen northern blast as it blew across the hills, swaying the big trees hither and thither as if they were bulrushes, and now and then tearing off huge branches which fell crashing to the ground. Other and sadder victims were sacrificed to this fierce north wind. Human beings as well as inanimate objects fell before him. He struck down with his

mighty arm, not only the old and feeble, but the young and strong; just as he swept away the clouds, hurrying them across the skies, beyond the horizon line, away out of sight. Sometimes in one day, a cruel malady would seize one occupant out of each one of the three or four little villages clustered on the hillside. A sharp pain attacked the lungs, and after a brief illness the resistless disease bore away the sufferer to the silent grave.

At the very moment of which we write, a group of black-clad mourners were standing near one of the pleasantest houses in the isolated village of Tannenegg, waiting for the sound of the church bell, as the signal to lift the covered bier on which was stretched the body of a young woman, the last victim to the north

wind's cruel stroke, and to bear her to her final resting place. In the quiet room within, two children were seated on a bench, which ran along the wall. They formed a striking contrast to each other. The girl, a little black-eyed frowning thing, dressed in some mourning stuff, followed with fierce looks the rapid movements of a woman who, standing before an open cup-board, was moving its contents over and about, as if in search of something that did not come to hand. The boy was also watching her, but his dancing blue eyes had in them a merry look of pleased expectation.

"I want to go out, Cousin Judith," said the girl, and her tones were half angry, half anxious, "Where can my mother be?"

"Be still, be still," said the woman, still tumbling the contents of the cup-board about nervously. "I shall find something pretty for you presently; then you must sit down quietly and play with it, and not go outside, not one step, do you hear? Pshaw! there is nothing but rubbish here!"

"Well, then give us the rose," said the little girl, still scowling.

The woman looked about the room.

"There are no roses here," she said. "How should there be, in March?" she added, half vexed at having looked for them. "There," said the child, pointing towards a book that the woman had but a moment before replaced in the cup-board.

"Ah! now I know what you mean. So your mother always kept the rose, the

"Fortune rose?" I often envied her when she used to show it to us in her hymn-book;" and as she spoke, she turned the leaves of the old hymnal, until she found the rose and handed it to the child.

"Take it," she said, "be quiet, and do not get up from your seats till I come back;" and she hurried from the room.

The little girl took the prettily-painted rose, in her hand; it was an old acquaintance, her favorite Sunday plaything.

When her mother wanted to secure a quiet hour for herself on Sundays, she used to give her "Fortune rose" to her little Veronica, and it was sure to occupy the child for a long time in perfect contentment.

"Look, this is the way you must do," said the child, as she pulled with her

fingers a small strip of paper that stood out from the side of the picture; suddenly before the astonished eyes of the boy the red full calix of the rose flew open, disclosing a glittering golden verse that lay in the centre of the flower. Then Veronica pushed the paper-strip back, and the rose folded its leaves and was a perfect flower again.

Quite dazzled by this wonderful magic the little boy stared with amazement at the rose, and then seized it to try for himself.

While the children were playing, Veronica's mother was being laid in her grave. After awhile Cousin Judith came back into the room. She was "cousin" to all Tannenegg, though related to no one. She came back to take the rose, and put

it into the book, which she replaced in the cup-board. "Sit still awhile longer, children;" she said, "and presently your mother will come for you. Be good and do not trouble her, for she has enough to bear already."

It was the little boy's mother she meant, and the children knew it. They knew also very well, that they must be good and not trouble her, for they had seen her for two days going about the house with eyes red with weeping. Presently she entered the room, and took the children one by each hand, and went to the door with them. She seemed to be struggling with sad and heavy thoughts. She usually spoke cheerily to the children, but now she was silent, and every now and then she furtively wiped away a tear.

"Where are we going, mother?" asked the boy.

"We must go to the doctor's, Dietrich," she answered, "your father is very ill." And she led them along the foot path toward the little town, where the white houses shone in the sunlight. Fohrensee was a new place, that had sprung up as if in one night from the soil, and now stood there a great white spot against the dark hillside. Not long before, it had been only a little cluster of houses standing in a protected spot on the side of the hill, not very far below Tannenegg. It was so situated that the biting north wind, which blew so sharply over the exposed houses of Tannenegg, did not reach the nook where little Fohrensee lay bathed in the full light of the sun. But the little place

was high enough to be visited by all the cooling breezes, and was healthy, pure and fresh, to a remarkable degree. When, not long before this time, an enterprising inn-keeper discovered its health-giving qualities, and built an inn there, guests filled it so rapidly that he soon put up another. Soon, one after another, little inns sprang up, as from the ground, and then a crowd of trades-people came up from the valley, and settled around, for the number of guests constantly increased, and the strangers found the spot so favorable to health, that it became a favorite winter resort. And thus the obscure little Fohrensee became, in a few years, a large and flourishing town, stretching out in every direction.

Gertrude, however, walking sturdily

along with the children, was not going as far as Fohrensee, with its shining white houses. She turned off into a foot path that led to several scattered dwellings up on the hillside, and soon reached an open space, on which stood a handsome house, with large stables near by. Out from the stable, a hostler had just led a spirited horse, which he began to harness into a light wagon. Instantly the little boy freed his hand from his mother's, planted himself before the horse, and could not be induced to move.

"Stay there then, if you want to," said his mother, "we will go on to the house; but you must take care not to go too near the horse."

The doctor was just hurrying out from his office; he must have had a long dis-

tance to go, for he was starting off before the usual time for office hours was over. Gertrude apologized, and begged the doctor to excuse her for not having come earlier to see him; she had been very busy with her invalid, and could not get away before. "Never mind; as you have come, I will wait a few minutes," said the physician, briefly; "Come in; how is your husband?"

Gertrude went into the room, and told the doctor about her sick husband. It was Steffan, a strong, young man, on whom the mountain sickness had seized with unusual violence. The doctor silently shook his head. He took a small mortar that stood on the office table, and shook into it some stuff which he ground with the marble pestle. His eyes fell on the

child who stood by Gertrude's side, gazing earnestly at the doctors's occupation. The little creature had something unusual about her, and attracted attention at once. Under her thick black hair and heavy brows, her big eyes looked forth with a solemn gaze, as if everything she saw gave her food for thought.

"He had no one but himself to blame for it, I fancy," said the doctor, as he filled some small square papers with his powders.

"No, no! he was not the least of a brawler; he was a quiet industrious fellow. They had rented some of our rooms, and lived there peaceably and happily for three whole years, and never was an unkind word exchanged between them. But he was a stranger in these parts; he was

never called anything but the Bergamasker, and the other fellows could never forgive him for having won the prettiest and most courted girl in the whole village. They never ceased to tease and irritate him, and on this especial evening at the Rehbock they must have been unusually offensive. Apparently they were all somewhat excited, for they could afterwards give no clear account of the affair, but the end was that the Bergamasker came home fatally wounded, and died the next day. Everything has been different among us since the Rehbock was built. Our village used to be quiet and orderly; every one was contented to work all the week and rest on Sunday. Nobody ever heard of such a thing as noisy drinking and rowdyism. But I have another errand with you

now, doctor. Lene charged me on her death bed to attend to it. She did not leave any money, but she had an excellent outfit. She bade me sell her bedstead and her bureau, and bring you the proceeds, to settle what she owed you. She was very anxious that I should see to it, for she felt that you had done a great deal for her; and she spoke of how often you had climbed the hill both by day and night, to visit her. So, please give me the bill, doctor, so that I may settle it at once, as I promised her."

"What relatives has the child?" asked the doctor shortly.

"She has none at all in these parts," replied Gertrude. "She has been with me all through her mother's illness, and now she is mine. Her mother's family

are all gone. She might perhaps be sent to her father's parish in Bergamaskische, but I shall not do that; she belongs now to us."

"I would not go there," said the child firmly in a low tone, clinging to Gertrude's dress with both hands.

The doctor opened a big book, tore out a leaf, and drew his pen twice across the closely written page.

"There," he said, handing the cancelled sheet to Gertrude, "that is all the bill I shall give you."

"Oh, doctor, may God reward you," said Gertrude. "Go, child, and thank the doctor, for you owe him a great deal."

The child obeyed after her own fashion. She planted herself before the big man, looked steadily at him with her great black eyes, and said somewhat hoarsely,

"Thank you." It sounded more like a command than anything else.

The doctor laughed.

"She is rather alarming," he said, "she is evidently not accustomed to say anything she does not really mean. I like that. But come, I must be off," and handing the medicine to Gertrude he left the room quickly so as to avoid her repeated thanks.

The little boy was standing where his mother had left him, still staring at the restless horse. The doctor looked kindly at the little fellow.

"Would you like to take care of a horse?" he asked, as he got into his wagon.

"No, I should like to drive one of my own," replied the child without hesitation.

"Well, you are quite right there: stick

to that, my boy," said the doctor, and drove away.

As Gertrude, holding a child by each hand, climbed the hillside, the boy said gaily,

"Say, mother, I can have one, can't I?"

"Do you mean to be a gentleman like the doctor, and own a horse, Dietrich?" asked the mother.

The boy nodded.

"So you can, if you will work hard for it, and stick to your work well. You see the doctor had to do that for a long time, and has to do it still, and if you stick to your work as he has, and never stop nor get tired till it is done, and well done, then you will be a gentleman, even if you are not a doctor. It doesn't matter what you do; you may be a gentleman if

you persevere and work hard and faithfully."

"Yes, with a horse," said Dietrich.

The little girl had been listening intently to every word of this conversation. Her black eyes blazed out suddenly as she looked up to Gertrude and said decidedly,

"I'll be one too."

"Yes, Yes, Mr. Veronica! Mr. Veronica! that sounds well," cried Dietrich, and he laughed aloud at the idea.

Veronica thought it no laughing matter, however. She pressed Gertrude's hand firmly and looked up with glowing eyes, as she said, "I can be one too, can't I mother; say?"

"You should not laugh, Dietrich," said his mother kindly. "Veronica can be

exactly what you can be. If she works steadily, and does not grow tired and careless, but keeps on till her work is finished and well finished, she will be a lady as you will be a gentleman."

Veronica trotted along contentedly after this explanation. She did not speak again. The frowning brows were smoothed and the fiery eyes now shone with the light of childish joy as she caught sight of the first flowers that began to peep above the ground. The child's face looked fairly charming now; her well-formed features framed by the dark locks, made a beautiful picture.

Dietrich was also silent: but he was pursuing the same train of thought, for he broke out presently,

"Will she have a horse too?"

"Why not, as well as you. It all depends on how steadily and how faithfully you both work," replied Gertrude.

"Well, then, we shall have two horses," cried the boy, joyfully. "Where shall we put the stable, mother?"

"We can see to that bye and bye, there is plenty of time for that. It won't do for you to be thinking about the horse all the time, you know, you must keep your mind on your work if you mean to do it well."

Dieterli said no more. He was busy trying to decide on which side of the house it would be best to put the stable.

That night, Gertrude again hurried down the hill to the doctor's house, and this time she brought him back with her.

Her husband's illness had taken a turn for the worse, and the next day he died.

CHAPTER II.

WITH FRESH COURAGE.

A few days later a numerous company of mourners followed another black bier to the sunny church-yard.

Steffan, the saddler, had been universally respected. He had begun life modestly; there had been no large industries in Tannenegg in his early days. He married the quiet and orderly Gertrude, who worked with him at his trade, and helped support the frugal household. Soon the flood of prosperity invaded Fohrensee, and naturally the only saddler in the vicinity had his hands full of work.

Now Gertrude's help was needed in earnest, and she did not fail. They were soon in possession of a nice little house of their own, with a garden about it, and no matter how much work she might have to do in the shop, everything in her own province of housekeeping was as well and carefully ordered as if Gertrude had no other business to occupy her time and thoughts. And Steffan, Gertrude and their little Dieterli lived simple, useful and contented lives and were a good example to all the neighborhood.

Now, to-day, Gertrude stood weeping by the window and looked across to the church-yard, where that very morning they had laid her good man. Now she must make her way alone; she had no

one to help her, no one belonging to her except her two children, and for them she must work, for she never admitted for a moment that the orphaned Veronica was not hers to care for as well as her own little Dietrich.

She did not lose courage. As soon as the first benumbing effect of her sorrow had passed a little, she gazed up at the shining heavens and said to herself, "He who has sent this trouble will send me strength to bear it;" and in full trust in this strength she went to work, and seemed able to do more than ever.

Her property, outside of the little capital which her husband had laid by, consisted of her house, which was free from debt, and of which she could let a good part. The question was, whether she could carry

on the remunerative business that her husband had been engaged in, until little Dietrich should be old enough to assume the direction of it, and pursue it as his father had done before him. Gertrude retained the services of a workman who had been employed by Steffan, and she herself did not relax her labors early and late, to oversee the work and keep all in running order.

For the first few weeks after her mother's death little Veronica sat every evening weeping silently by herself in a dark corner of the room. When Gertrude found her thus grieving, she asked kindly what ailed her, and again and again, she received only this sorrowful answer,

"I want my mother."

Gertrude drew the child tenderly towards

her, caressing her, and promising her that they would all go together some day to join her mother, who had only gone on before, that she might get strong and well again. And gradually this second mother grew to take the place of her own, and no game, no amusement could draw the loving child away from Gertrude's side. Only Dietrich could succeed in enticing her to go with him now and then.

The lad's love for his mother showed itself in a louder and more demonstrative manner. He often threw his arms about her neck, crying passionately,

"My mother belongs to me and to nobody else."

Then Veronica's brows would knit over her flashing eyes, until they formed a long

straight line across her face. But she did not speak. And Gertrude would put one arm about the boy's neck and the other about the little girl's, and say,

"You must not speak so, Dietrich. I belong to you both, and you both belong to me."

In general, the two children were excellent friends, and completely inseparable. They were not happy unless they shared everything together and wherever one went, the other must go too. They went regularly to school every morning, and were always joined by two of the neighbors' children, who went with them.

These were, the son of the shoemaker, long, bony Jost, with his little, cunning eyes,— and the sexton's boy, who was as broad as he was long, and from whose round

face two pale eyes peered forth upon the world, in innocently stupid surprise. His name was Blasius, nicknamed Blasi.

Often, on the way to school, quarrels arose between Dieterli and the two other boys. It would occur to one of them to try what Veronica would do if he were to give her a blow with his fist. Scarcely had he opened his attack when he found himself lying on his nose, while Dieterli played a vigorous tattoo on his back with no gentle fists. Or the sport would be to plant a good hard snow-ball between Veronica's shoulders, with the mortifying result to the aggressive boy, of being pelted in the face with handfuls of wet snow, until he was almost stifled, and cried out for mercy. Dieterli was not afraid of either of them; for though smaller and

thinner than either, he was also much more lithe, and could glide about like a lizard before, behind and all around his adversaries, and slip through their fingers while they were trying to catch him. Veronica was well avenged, and went on the rest of her way without fear of molestation. If one of the other lads felt in a friendly mood, and wished to act as escort to the little girl, Dieterli soon gave him to understand that that was his own place, and he would give it up to no one.

Every evening "Cousin Judith" came for a little visit, to give Gertrude some friendly advice about the children, or the household economy. She used to say that the gentle widow needed some one now and then to show claws in her behalf, and Judith knew herself to be in full possession

of claws, and of the power to use them, an accomplishment of which she was somewhat proud. One evening she crossed over between daylight and dark, and entered the room where Veronica was, with her favorite plaything in her hand, moving it back and forth as she sat in the window in the waning light. She could read very nicely now, for two years had passed since she had lost her own mother, and had become Gertrude's child. Many a time had she read over the motto which shone out so mysteriously from the breast of the opened rose. To-day she was poring over it again, and her absorption in "that same old rose," as Dieterli called it, had so annoyed the lively lad that he left her, and had gone out into the kitchen to find his mother. When Judith saw the

girl sitting thus alone, buried in thought, she asked her what she was thinking about in the twilight all by herself.

Dieterli, whom no sound ever escaped, had heard Cousin Judith come in, and came running in from the kitchen to see what was going on. Veronica looked up at the visitor and asked earnestly,

"Cousin Judith, what is fortune?"

"Ah, you are always asking some strange question that no one else ever thought of asking;" said Cousin Judith, "where on earth did you ever hear of fortune?"

"Here," said Veronica, holding up the rose with the golden verse in the centre. "Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, do, child."

Veronica read —

"Fortune stands ready, full in sight;
He wins who knows to grasp it right."

"Well, it means this — I should say — fortune is whatever anyone wants the most."

"Fortune is a horse, then," said Dieterli quickly.

Veronica sat thinking. "But, Cousin Judith," she said presently, "how can any one 'grasp fortune'?"

"With your hands." replied Cousin Judith unhesitatingly, "You see, our hands are given us to work with, and if we use them diligently and do our work well, as it ought to be done, then fortune comes to us; so don't you see we 'grasp it' with our hands?"

The verse had now become endued with life, and meant something real and attractive to Veronica. She did not lay her rose out of her hand for a long time, that evening, notwithstanding that Dietrich cast threatening glances upon it, and finally broke out in vexation,

"I will tear off the spring some time, and spoil the thing altogether."

The rose was not put into the book and the book into the cup-board, until the time came for the children to say their evening prayers. This was the closing act of every day; and it was so fixed and regular a habit, that the children never needed to be bidden to fold their hands, and kneel to ask God's blessing before they slept.

CHAPTER III.

NINE YEARS LATER.

A sunshiny Easter morning shone over hill and valley. A crowd of holiday-making people poured out of the little church at Tannenegg, and scattered in every direction. A long row of blooming lads and lassies came in close ránks, moving slowly towards the parsonage. They were the newly-confirmed young people of the parish, who had that day partaken of the Communion for the first time. They were going to the house of their pastor, to express their gratitude for his careful and tender teaching and

guidance, before they went out into the world. Among these were Dietrich and Veronica. Gertrude stood at a little distance from the church, and watched the procession as it passed by. Her eyes were filled with tears of pleasurable emotion, as she noticed that her dark-eyed Veronica was conspicuous among all the maidens for the tasteful neatness of her costume, and for the sweetness and grace of her bearing. The glance which Veronica cast upon the mother in passing was full of love and gratitude; and seemed to repeat the words that the faithful girl had spoken in the morning, as she left her to go to the church. "I cannot thank you enough, as long as I live, for what you have done for me, mother." A yet brighter expression of happiness crossed Ger-

trude's countenance when the young men came in procession after the girls, as her eyes fell on the well-formed lad, a head taller than his companions, who nodded at her, and greeted her with merry laughing looks, kissing his hand again and again, and yet once again. That was her tall handsome Dietrich. His mother's heart leaped in her breast at the sight of his fresh young life, so full of hope and promise. Gertrude waited till the visit to the pastor was over, and the young people had separated on their various paths. Then she in her turn entered the parsonage. She wished herself to speak her thanks to this true and long tried adviser and friend, for all that he had done for her children.

"You are a fortunate mother," said the

aged pastor, after he had listened to Gertrude's expressions of gratitude. "Those are two uncommon children that the good God has confided to your care, and I feel the greatest interest in them. The lad has a clear head, and a winning grace that draws everyone to him. Veronica is serious and conscientious; she has a calm steady nature and can be depended upon for fidelity to duty, such as it is rare to find. The children will be your stay and comfort in your old age. May you keep them in the paths of virtue."

"With God's help;" said Gertrude, and she left the parsonage with tears of happiness in her eyes. As she passed the garden of her neighbor Judith, the latter called out over the low hedge,

"They have just gone by, all four of them. It always seems to me strange that while all babies in the cradle look just alike, so that you can't tell them apart, they grow up to be such very different men and women."

"No, no, these four were never alike," replied Gertrude, "but I agree that they grow more and more unlike every day."

"Yes, that they do. And of you three near neighbors, you certainly have drawn the best lot in children," said Judith with enthusiasm, "two like your two are not to be found in a long day's journey. Veronica will fully repay you for what you have done for her."

"I have been repaid long ago by the child's attachment to me. She has never given me anything but satisfaction ever

since her mother died. If I have any anxiety about Veronica it is lest she over-work herself. There is something feverish in her love of work; she can never do enough. No matter how late I go into her room at night, she is always finishing off some piece of work; and no matter how early I get up in the morning, she has already begun something new. If I had not positively forbidden it, she would keep at it even on a Sunday. It is a real source of anxiety to me, lest she should over-work and break down."

"Oh, I don't think you need be afraid of that, Gertrude; work never yet hurt any one, least of all the young folks. Let her work away. But I don't see the need of her scowling so all the time. She looks for all the world as if she were fighting and

struggling against enemies and difficulties of all sorts. I like better Dietrich's laughing eyes; they are so full of fun. When he goes down the street singing —

'Gladly and merrily
Live to-day cheerily,
Black care and sorrow
Leave till to-morrow,'

it goes right to my heart, and I could sing too for very joy. No one can help loving him."

Gertrude listened with sunshine in her face to these words of praise, but a little cloud of anxiety shadowed her eyes as she said,

"Yes, God be praised, he is a good boy and means well, but I do wish that he had a little of Veronica's firmness of purpose It is very pleasant to have every one like

him, but too great popularity is not always a good thing. And those two companions that are always hanging about him, are not such as I myself would choose for his friends."

"If they could all be put to some steady work it would be the best thing for them," said Judith. "Idleness is the mother of mischief. Blasi is not an ill-meaning fellow, but he is lazy, greatly to his own injury. Long Jost is the worst of the two; a sly-boots, and a rare one too. It is to be hoped that he will break his own leg, when he's trying to trip some one else up with it."

"No, no, Judith, on this holy Easter day, we will not have such unkind hopes as that. I hope and believe that the good God holds the children in his protecting

hand. We have given them to him; that is my comfort and support. Good-bye, Judith; come often to see us; we are always glad of your company."

On the evening of this sunny Easter day, while rosy clouds moved slowly across the clear sky, and the golden glow faded in the far west behind the wooded heights, Gertrude came back from a long walk in the fields and woods. On one side of her strode Dietrich, talking rapidly and earnestly: the fresh joy of youth was written in every movement of his little figure, and laughed from the depths of his clear eyes. On the other side Veronica walked, listening in silence. Her noble features, above which her black hair fell in shining waves, had a serious, thoughtful expression, but every now and then, when

Dietrich let fall some particularly apt expression, a look would cross her face that irradiated it like a sunbeam crossing a shadowed plain. Mother Gertrude looked now proudly at her radiant son, now approvingly at her stately daughter, and again she lifted grateful glances towards the glowing heavens where she saw promise of another brilliant day to come. Far and wide, in all Tannenegg, was not to be found that day, such another happy mother as Gertrude.

When they reached the crossways where the footpath led up by the tavern of the Rehbock, Dietrich turned into it, and his mother was about to follow him, but Veronica drew her back, saying anxiously,

"Don't go that way, mother dear; it is not much farther by the other road."

Dietrich laughed aloud.

"Now there it is again. Do you know, mother, that I can never get Veronica to go past the Rehbock. She would rather go ten minutes farther round, and she will not say why either. To-day, Veronica, I am determined that you shall go this way or tell us why not."

"No; to-day we will not quarrel, Dietrich, please;" said the girl entreatingly, but with a tone that showed no signs of yielding her point, "let us sing a song as we go; mother loves to hear us sing."

As she spoke, she walked steadily along the road, and the others followed.

"Well then," said the lad, "let's sing 'Gladly and merrily'"—and he began to sing the familiar tune.

"To-night I should rather sing the

Fisher-boat," said Veronica, and without demur the good-natured boy dropped his song, and joined his clear tones with Veronica's steady voice, the two harmonizing perfectly as they sang:

"A tiny boat, a fisher-boat,
Tossed lightly on the silver sea;
Around the rocks, in air, afloat
The white gulls circle lazily.
A tiny boat, a fisher-boat—
The fisher draws his slender line;
He half in dream-land seems to float,
Saying, 'to-morrow will be fine.'"

Softly singing, in the soft falling shadows of evening, the happy trio drew towards their home, and disappeared within the cottage door.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL AT HOME.

Dietrich had already worked for some time in his father's business. It was all in the best possible condition; the work shop, the tools and materials had been carefully kept up, and everything was fresh and in good working order. The old customers had not withdrawn their custom, for the former workman who had served under Steffan for many years had continued his deceased master's methods, so that the reputation of the work was sustained, and as Fohrensee grew, so also the saddler's orders grew, and the business

flourished. So Dietrich found his trade ready made to his hand, and as good a prospect lay before him as heart could wish. He took hold with a good will, and being his own master did not make him the less diligent. He was determined first to work faithfully till he had thoroughly learned the business, and then to travel for a while. When he had seen the world a bit he would come back, go on with the business farther and farther, and become a gentleman; and then—then —where could a happier man be found than he should be, living with his mother and Veronica in peace and plenty. His mother should pass her days in happy idleness if she wished, without care, without sorrow, in wealth and comfort, and Veronica! Yes, he would give Veronica

a life far happier and more beautiful than she had ever dreamed of for herself! While his brain teemed with these pleasant thoughts, Dietrich sang and whistled at his work all day long, and did good work, too. He had a skilful hand and a clear head, and his work went successfully on.

Veronica had persuaded her mother to let her stay longer in the Industrial School than was usual with the young girls of the neighborhood. Even up to the day of her confirmation, she had taken sewing lessons twice from a most accomplished teacher. A short time before Easter, the teacher had assured Gertrude that Veronica had made such extraordinary progress, that she was already prepared to teach, and that she had com-

pleted the course taught at that school, and could learn no more there. Veronica certainly deserved farther training and the teacher suggested that it would be well worth while for her to take lessons in embroidery of lame Sabina in Fohrensee. She would then be sure of a position as a teacher, as high as her utmost ambition could desire.

It had always been Gertrude's plan to have Veronica learn to work at the saddler's business, as there is a good deal of the fine work which is suitable for women, and which it needs a woman's hand to carry out. She hoped that in this way her children could always remain together and with her. The fine embroidery for which lame Sabina was noted, it did not seem to her at all necessary for Veronica

to learn, but she was willing to leave the decision to her. As soon as Veronica heard of this new work to be learned, she was eager to begin upon it, and she left her mother no peace until she extracted from her the promise that directly after the confirmation, this new undertaking should be entered upon.

A few days after Easter Sunday, Veronica went to take her first lesson. It was very early in the morning when she started to go down to Fohrensee; so early that people were just beginning to open their windows, and only here and there a sleepy face was to be seen at the door of a house. She had to go early in order to get in a good day's work, for she was to come home at night, and it was an hour's walk each way. She knew well

the old cottage with the beautiful carnations illuminating its windows, which was the home of lame Sabina. The windows were already open, and the door also. She entered and her new life began.

Up in Tannenegg, Dietrich sat at his work, singing and whistling merrily. His mother, busy with her household affairs went hither and thither about the house, from sitting room to kitchen, and then with the feeding-bucket, out on the grass plat before the house, where a flock of handsome fowl were pecking about. All was still quiet in the neighboring houses, but over by the well stood the never-idle Judith, beating and turning her clothes as she washed them. Along the road with uncertain steps came the old sexton, swinging the big church-keys in his hand;

he had been ringing the early morning peal. As he lifted his cap a little to salute Judith at the well, she called out,

"Good day, neighbor, I was just thinking it would be a good exchange if the old folks were to lie abed at this hour and let the young ones pull the bell rope."

"Well, some one must be doing it," said the other, and passed on his way.

Judith had been busy at her washing full two hours longer, when in the doorway of the sexton's house appeared a young fellow, whose figure, almost as broad as it was long, filled the opening, with scarce anything to spare. He tried to yawn, but there was not room enough to stretch his arms, so he stepped outside for the purpose, and there he gaped so heartily that all the inside of his big mouth and throat was distinctly visible.

"There 's nothing in it, Blasi! I 've had a good look at it," cried Judith. "If you had been here two hours ago, you might have seen a sight. A girl with a whole mouthful of gold! What do you say to that?"

Blasi caught at this, and brought his jaws together with a snap.

"What! full of gold?" he exclaimed, and opened his sleepy eyes to their utmost extent. "Why does n't the foolish thing carry it in her pocket? Where does she come from?"

"That's no concern of yours. You will never come up with her," replied Judith.

"Tell me, for all that," urged Blasi, coming toward Judith," I can go after her, and I 've no doubt I shall come up with her, and then there 's no telling what may

happen. Come, where did she go, now? Do you know her name?"

"Her name is Early Morn, Blasi," said Judith pleasantly. "Did you never hear the saying, 'There 's gold in the mouth of the early morn.'"

Blasi made a wry face and began in an angry tone,

"There 's nothing very clever in that"— but just then he remembered that when he came out of the house he had intended to come over and say something quite different to Judith; so he changed his tone quickly, and said,

"Can you lend me a franc or two; I have just time to do a little business before eleven o'clock, and then I must be back to ring the noon bell; I must try to help father, a little."

"No, no, Blasi, I have no francs for you," said Judith decidedly. "It wants three hours yet of being eleven o'clock. Use those big arms of yours, and they 'll bring you francs enough. And so saying, she lifted her clothes-basket on her head, and walked away.

Blasi stood looking after her, a moment, then he sauntered off, with both hands in his pockets, up the road towards, the shoemaker's old house. There sat Jost before the door, hammering away at something as if for dear life. Blasi drew near, and stood watching the busy hands of his friend, who presently cried out angrily,

"So it is holiday with you, is it, you lazy-bones? It is maddening to see one fellow go wandering about with his hands in his pockets, while another has to sit on

his three-legged stool, hammering away at the soles of these — these — these Tanneneggers' boots. To-morrow is Cherry-festival in Fohrensee, and every one is going; and I, I must get their boots ready! I wish a thunder-storm would come and wash this away, and that, and the whole lot of 'em!" As he spoke he tossed away first the mended boots, then the hammer, and last of all the three-legged stool, away, as far as he could throw them, down into the meadow. He was white with rage.

"What stuff!" said Blasi, dryly. "You are paid for your cobbling; you are better off than I am. I haven't a rap, and am in debt besides. I was going to ask you if you couldn't lend me a franc. You have money, I know."

"Oh yes, you sleepy-head! It's very

likely I have money for you, when I'm in such need of it myself! Go ask Dietrich; he has his pockets full, and a big heap besides. But don't be such a fool as to ask him for just one mean little franc; ask for five. I'll use two or three of them; tell him you'll pay him again in a week."

Blasi seemed rather undecided.

"I should have gone to him long ago," he said, "but his mother is always about, and she looks at a fellow as a bird does when somebody is trying to rob her nest. I'm afraid of her."

"Poh! it's all right enough to borrow a little money if you're going to pay it back again. Don't be a fool! Go along!" and Jost enforced his advise with an emphatic shove that sent Blasi rolling along much faster than he wished to go. He

grumbled a little at this unpleasant style of progression, and muttered between his teeth,

"He's no right to treat me so; I'm as good as he is, any day."

When he reached Gertrude's garden, he stood still and looked over the hedge. Dietrich's mother was there, planting her vegetable bed. He sauntered back and forth for awhile, and when he saw her go to the other corner of the garden, he thought he could now get without being seen, into the room where he heard Dietrich whistling at his work. He went round the garden, and was just going in at the back gate, when he came plump against Gertrude. He went by quickly as if he had had no idea of going in; and then hung about watching his chance, but

as time did not stand still while he waited, it was bye-and-bye eleven o'clock, and he had to go off to ring the noon bell.

In the afternoon, neighbor Judith was hoeing in her little garden. Blasi stood hesitating in his door-way, and then came out and stood watching her at her work.

"I am always surprised, Blasi," said Judith, looking up from her work, "to see you in company with a fellow, who steals your money from your pockets, before you know it is there. I would not have anything to do with such a one."

"What? who?" asked Blasi, fumbling in his empty pockets." "Who picks my pockets? Who are you talking about? I know I did have some; I wish you would tell me the thief."

"I'll tell no tales," said Judith, working away.

"Bah! tell me, won't you? A fellow can't defend himself unless he knows who is attacking him," growled Blasi. "You might say who you mean."

"Well, I will. Go and take him by the ear. His name is Idleness!" As Judith spoke, she raised her head, and looked Blasi full in the face; then she bent to her work again.

The lad was angry. He had hoped that he was going to get something back of which he had been robbed, and that Judith would help him as she had been a witness of the theft.

"Oh, what a fuss you make over a few minutes," he said crossly; "I have to go at four o'clock to ring the bell. I think I ought to take a little from the old man."

"I should say you took more from him

than he had. It has just struck half past two; do you know how many minutes there are in an hour and a half?"

"There's no getting along with you," said Blasi, turning away.

"Well, you get along finely without me, so go on and prosper," said Judith quickly as the lad disappeared.

Blasi had by no means given up his project. He did not see anyone in Gertrude's garden as he passed along. He clambered up on the lattice by the hedge and peeped through the open window into the room. Dietrich's mother was seated near her son; both were working steadily, the young fellow was chattering and laughing gaily, and his mother answered and laughed too, but they did not stop working all the while. Blasi saw plainly

that this was not the time to make his request. He would wait until the mother had gone to the kitchen, as she was sure to do bye-and-bye. Four o'clock came and the great business of his day was at hand; it was time to ring the bell, and he had to go. At last when evening came Blasi found his opportunity. He stood watching outside the door, when suddenly Dietrich threw it open, aud started off with rapid strides.

Blasi called out, "Wait, wait a minute, can't you? What's your hurry?"

Dietrich turned about.

"What do you want? Tell me quickly. I'm going to meet Veronica; she can't come home alone through the woods after dusk."

"Well, look here," said Blasi, breathing

hard with his haste, and holding Dietrich by the arm. "You see, I'm in trouble for want of a few francs or so. Can't you lend them to me? I'll give them back again very soon."

"I haven't that much about me now. Stop a minute — yes, here are two francs and here's a half; will that be enough?" and throwing the money to Blasi, the young man hastened away.

As evening drew on, Gertrude stood at the end of the garden and looked down the road. She listened to every sound that came from below. She was waiting for her children's voices, for the sound of their footsteps; her children, who made her life, her happiness, her hope! Ah! there they are! that is Dietrich's voice talking eagerly, while Veronica's bell-like

laugh sounds clear through the still evening air. With a heart filled to overflowing with happiness, Gertrude went forth to meet them.

As they sat together round the table in their usual cheerful mood, the mother asked for an account of this, Veronica's first day among strangers, and how she liked her new work.

"Very much indeed, mother," was the answer, and the young girl's face beamed with a smile that swept away all trace of the clouds that sometimes marred its beauty.

"I can't tell you how delightful it is to be able to earn so much. But after all, mother dear, the best part is that I can come home to you at night."

"That's what I think too," said Dietrich

quickly, and you had but to look in his eyes to see that he spoke the truth.

"And I am as glad as either of you," said Gertrude smiling. "It has been a long day for me. It seems a great while since you started off this morning, Veronica."

"What! when your only son was sitting by you all day long?" asked Dietrich playfully.

"Oh, you know what I mean. I need you both to make me perfectly happy, and cannot spare either of you;" and she looked from one to the other with caressing glances.

Veronica told them all about the new teacher and the new work, and it was late in the evening before the three separated for the night.

CHAPTER V.

UPON UNSAFE PATHS.

After this evening, Dietrich was scarcely ever able to go on his walk alone. Blasi had always some pretext for joining him, and when Jost found out that regularly every evening his friend took the same walk at the same hour, he too discovered that he had a great deal to tell him, and to consult him about. The two accompanied him through the wood, and when they emerged from it on the other side, they usually saw a graceful figure coming along the white road that led up the hill from Fohrensee. Then without a word on the

subject, as by tacit agreement, they stopped, shook hands, and separated; the other two turned back toward the village, and Dietrich went on. They felt instinctively that this was the best thing to do. Dietrich, certainly, found out that his companions were not to Veronica's mind, when one evening, the three being so engaged in talk that they had not noticed that they were later than usual, Veronica came into the wood before they left it, and she recognized Blasi and Jost, although they turned quickly back.

"They can't have the best of consciences," said Veronica, as Dietrich joined her; "if they had only straight-forward business on hand, why did they take themselves off so hastily, as soon as I came in sight?"

"Can't you understand that we may have

something to talk about, that we do not wish you to hear?" asked Dietrich.

The girl was silent a few moments, and then she said, rather seriously,

"It would suit me far better, if you were not so much in company with those two fellows. Blasi is absolutely idle, and cannot be nice, and Jost is really bad; you can see that in his face. He never dares to look me full in the eye; he always avoids a direct glance, as if he feared that his eyes would betray him. I believe he is thoroughly false."

"No, no, you should not judge him so harshly," said Dietrich, good-humoredly. "He is not what you think him; he is a good friend to me, and has already taught me a great deal that I should never have got at without his help. He is a very clever fellow."

Veronica let the matter drop, but it was plain that she had not changed her opinion.

The days grew longer and brighter. The wood was filled with sweeter perfumes evening after evening, as the two friends sauntered along their homeward path, and in each young heart the feeling grew and ripened, that still sweeter and more beautiful days were to come.

One afternoon in May, Veronica paced leisurely along the white hill-road, her eyes fixed on the tall oak on the borders of the wood, which marked the place where the foot-path came out upon the high road. Everything was quiet; not a human being in sight. She reached the spot and looked anxiously into the wood. She listened; she peered between the

trees; all was solitude. The tree-tops, softly murmuring, rocked gently to and fro, and through the branches she saw the sunset glow. For the first time, the young girl entered the wood alone. It was quite dark, in there. She passed along with rapid step, among the solemn pines, hastening faster and faster, as the trees seemed to draw together about her. When she came out upon the open pathway, she saw Dietrich coming across the field in hot haste. He was breathless when he reached her.

"I don't like to have you come alone through the wood, Veronica," he said, "I thought I should be in time, but I could not get rid of those two fellows. I tried to get away two or three times, but they always had something more to say, and kept me."

"Where were you, Dietrich?"

"They had some business with me; that is, Jost had something to tell me, and Blasi was there too. Jost did not care to speak of it on the open street, and so we went into the Rehbock; and that is what made me so late. Why, what's the matter, Veronica? "Are you ill?"

She was as pale as a ghost.

"What! You've been to the Rehbock, Dietrich!" she exclaimed in evident distress. "Oh, don't go there! Please don't go to that place again!"

"Oh, now we are to have the old story over again, are we?" said the young man, laughing, "you have taken some foolish whim into your head; you really don't know why yourself. What's your prejudice against that house in particular?"

"I do know why; and it is no whim," said Veronica, earnestly. "I will tell you all about it. That house has been a terror to me ever since I can remember anything. We were both so young that you probably do not recollect it at all. We both went with mother to the doctor's, but you didn't go into the house, I remember now. Mother told the doctor that my father was killed at the Rehbock. I have never forgotten it since. I am constantly seeing him lying dead before my eyes; lying there struck down dead. I often dream about it, and in my dreams I am there — and — and sometimes when I look at his dead form in my dreams, it is not my father any more, but it is you — you, Dietrich, whom they have struck down dead at the Rehbock."

Dietrich was going to laugh at these words, but he glanced into Veronica's face and was silent. She was more in earnest than he had thought. He tried to quiet and reassure her, by saying that it was only a dream, and nothing to be afraid of. The dream came naturally enough, because she was always dwelling upon the tragedy of her father's death, and in dreams every one knows that faces are always changing. His explanation, however, did not make much impression upon Veronica. She said no more about it; but not all Dietrich's efforts were sufficient to chase the shadows from her face that evening, although he exerted himself to be even more amusing than usual. Gertrude observed her silence, as they sat about the table, and looked anxiously at her. When

they had separated for the night, Dietrich went into his mother's room to have a talk with her. He told her what Veronica had said, and begged her to reason with the young girl and urge her to lay aside these groundless fears which had taken possession of her. He represented to his mother, that of course he sometimes had things to talk over with his companions, and that there surely was no harm in their going to the Rehbock together for their conversations, and he begged her to make Veronica see the whole affair in a reasonable light. Gertrude was shocked to find that the child had heard and understood what she had said to the doctor, and distressed that she had taken it so much to heart. She promised to speak to Veronica, but she also cautioned her son

against forming an intimacy with Jost and Blasi. Dietrich cheerfully gave his word; declaring that he was not particularly fond of their company. The mother, however, on further consideration, decided to say nothing on the subject to Veronica, for she thought the whole thing would be the sooner forgotten if not spoken of, and she believed it unwise to stir up the terrors of the past.

The next afternoon, Dietrich left home much earlier than usual, determined not to be belated again, and hoping to escape altogether his too insistent companions. But scarcely had he reached the garden gate when he came upon Blasi, who was lying in wait for him. Dietrich tried to pass him quickly, and to show him that his company was not desired, but in vain

Blasi had not been waiting round half an hour to be turned off like that. He explained that he was in worse trouble than ever to-day, and wished to borrow more money than ever before; promising, of course, to pay it back very soon; "that is, as soon as possible," he added.

"Oh yes, well, when will it be possible, I wonder. How much have you paid me back, as yet, since you began to borrow of me?" said Dietrich angrily. "Let me go, Blasi, I've no time to spare."

But Blasi went along by his side, and before he had done talking, Jost joined them and held Dietrich fast by the other arm.

"Come, come," he cried, "I have something to tell you that will make you open your eyes, I guess. I came in a hurry on

purpose not to miss you. I've just come from the Rehbock, and I told them to keep the little back room for us, so that we can talk quietly, without danger of being interrupted. Come along, I say."

"I will not," said Dietrich, freeing his arm from the other's detaining grasp. "I haven't time, and I don't believe you have anything special to tell me, either. I must go." And Dietrich strode away; but Jost followed him.

"Don't be such a fool," he called out angrily, "can't you listen when I tell you that I know something decidedly to your advantage. Something that you'll be glad to know. You are running away because of her, and it is something that will be good for her as well as for you. So do stand still, and don't go scampering off as

if the gamekeepers were after you!" But Dietrich did not stop.

"What do you know about her, or her good?" he asked furiously. "Mind your own business and let us alone."

As Jost had his own interest in winning the young fellow over, he controlled himself, and said in most soothing tones,

"Dietrich, I am your friend. Some day you will be very grateful to me. As you are in such a hurry, I will not stop you now; only promise me to come over bye-and-bye for a few minutes to the Rehbock; there's a good fellow, and you will not be sorry. Will you come?"

"Well, I've no particular objection to that," said Dietrich, and ran off as fast as he could.

Blasi, who had kept pace with the other

two, seeing that there was no chance for him now, turned back with Jost, and the two went into the Rehbock together.

Dietrich met Veronica quite the other side of the wood. He did his best to rouse her from her silent mood, and to restore her to better spirits; but he found it impossible to efface the impression she had received the evening before. The painful memory had been too deeply stamped upon her mind, to be easily wiped out.

When the little family had bade each other good-night, after their usual affectionate conversation, Dietrich hesitated about keeping his half-made promise. He did not want to go; yet Jost's words, that the affair touched her as nearly as it did him, had made their intended im-

pression, and though it went sadly against his grain to know that Jost dared even to think about Veronica and her interests at all, still he could not help wondering what it was all about. Suddenly his resolution was taken; he turned about, went down stairs and softly left the house.

Jost was standing in the doorway of the Rehbock, looking out into the night to see if Dietrich was coming. They went at once into the little back room. Blasi was there, sitting behind a big empty bowl; indeed he never sat long behind a full one, for as the bowl was there to be emptied he thought the quicker it was done the better.

"I'm glad you have come," he cried out," for we've run quite dry here."

Dietrich perceived that he was expected to counteract the dryness; so he ordered some beer, and when this was supplied Jost began in a cautious tone,

"I have something to say to you, Dietrich, that I don't care for those outside to hear. Blasi can stay, because he is our comrade."

"And because he can be made useful," said Dietrich readily, for he knew of old that Jost was in the habit of rushing Blasi forward, where he did not dare to go himself.

"I don't know about that," said Jost, "but now listen to me. Do you know how a fellow who hasn't so much as a penny in his purse, can in one night get enough to build a big stone house, like

the one the landlord of the lion has in Fohrensee, and make himself a gentleman all at once? I know how; I know somebody who has explained it all to me, and I tell you, Dietrich, you have only to say the word, and you can do the same, and give up the whole saddler's business. You can afford to risk something; you're not stupid; and with you it will all go right in a twinkling."

"Do you mean by card-playing?" asked Dietrich rather contemptuously, for he had made up his mind about that long ago.

"No indeed, something very different. It is done on paper. You have nothing to do but put some money down, and you can win two or three times as much in no time."

"And lose *four* times, I suppose?"

"There's no losing about it;" said Jost confidently, "You're sure to win in the end, if you keep on long enough. It doesn't signify if you do lose a little at first — you can afford to wait."

"I think my trade is surer of winning;" said Dietrich.

"Oh yes, sure enough!" said Jost scornfully. "It is a pretty sight to see a fellow like you, sitting there year after year on the saddler's bench, scraping all the skin off his hands; and with all the income you have, too! why in ten years you won't have as much as will build you a house such as you want, and it would take ten years more to become a gentleman; and she'd like it a great deal better to have something nice now, and not wait till she is fifty years old."

Dietrich was red with anger.

"What business is it of yours to be forever thinking and talking about her?" he blazed out. "You have no concern with her whatever; just keep yourself to what you're fit for."

"Why do go on as you do?" asked Jost with a knowing wink. "Do you suppose it never enters anybody's head to ask why you keep on working and delving as if you liked it? Can't we guess who you're doing it all for?"

"And it's not at all out of the way to be thinking about her, either," interposed Blasi, "there's another ready enough to do that if there were any chance for him," and he winked significantly at Jost. Jost took no notice of the insinuation, but went on, addressing himself to Dietrich.

"There's no danger for you in this plan. We will share losses and gains alike, and if we do not like it we can leave off when ever we choose. But I don't see why we shouldn't like it, when we can earn so much with so little trouble, and without working from morning till night. There goes somebody now, who has all he wants, I should like to be in his place!"

A wagon was rattling by as he spoke, and its occupant was urging the galloping horse faster and faster along the road.

"That's the doctor," said Dietrich, looking out; "he has had to work hard enough and is still at it. He must be going to visit a very sick patient; he would not be driving at that rate for anything else. It is late for the old gentleman to be out."

"Work!" said Jost, "well, I speak for that kind of work; sitting in a chaise behind a horse. It's another part of speech to have to work with one's hands, as we do."

"The doctor has to work with his hands too, I'm sure of that. And besides, we have our evenings to ourselves, while he may be kept at it till eleven o'clock at night, as he is this evening, and later."

"Oh drop all this stupid talk and give us an answer; yes or no. Will you be a fool and go on pricking your fingers over your work, or will you join me and have things comfortable without working at all? Anybody but you would be grateful to me for the chance I offer you. I came to you with it because of our old friendship. I know plenty of fellows who would jump

at the chance. You can think it over till tomorrow, and then I'm sure you'll be glad to accept. I'll meet you here to-morrow evening, and bring some one with me who will explain it all clearly."

Dietrich agreed to think about it till to-morrow, and now, in high good-humor and increasing confidence in the coming good-fortune, he helped Blasi and Jost to empty the bowl, in a toast to the success of their new projects.

It was Veronica's habit to work on her embroidery for some time after going up to her bedroom, and this evening she was so much interested in her work, that she did not observe the flight of time, until she heard the clock strike one. She put by her sewing, and hastened to prepare for bed, as she must be up and stirring

again by five o'clock. Presently she heard the outer door opened softly, and then closed from the inside. She blew out her light and gently opened her bed-room door. The moon lighted up the passage-way with a faint beam. Some one came stealing up the staircase with noiseless steps. She saw that it was Dietrich. He went cautiously into his room and closed his door.

Veronica shut her door, and sat down upon her bed. All the blood seemed to rush to her heart and she could not stir. She knew in a moment that Dietrich, whom she had believed to be asleep long ago, had been visiting in secret the hated Rehbock. She sat some minutes motionless on her bed, in a kind of dull pain. Then she arose slowly, lighted her lamp

again, took out her work and with nervous fingers drove on her needle, which flew faster and faster through the white cloth. She did not sleep at all that night.

Nor did Dietrich fall asleep easily. His thoughts were busy and he could not come to any decision. What should he do?

If he could become rich at once, without working any more, why shouldn't he do it? Would it be best to consult his mother? No, that would upset everything. He was sure that his mother was too firmly wedded to the old ideas about ways of getting a living, to listen to any newfangled methods of making money without work.

And Veronica?

Certainly not Veronica, who valued

work above everything, and who indeed loved it so well, that she could not imagine that any one should ever wish to escape it.

But if he were successful, both his mother and Veronica would profit by his good fortune as much as himself. Why couldn't he go on with his own plans in his own way? Why need he ask leave of Veronica?

Before he slept, Dietrich had decided to meet Jost the next evening, and close with his offer.

When Gertrude came down stairs early in the morning, she found the breakfast ready, and Veronica dressed to go out.

"Wait just a moment," said the mother, "Dietrich will be down directly; I hear him coming."

"I must be off," replied Veronica. She went towards the door, but turned before going out. Her cheeks were flaming.

"Mother," she said, and her voice trembled, "in God's name, forbid him to go to that dreadful place. He did not come home till one o'clock last night." And she vanished. Gertrude gazed after her in surprise.

When Dietrich came down, he asked in his usual bright fashion, after Veronica, and when his mother with some anxiety told him what the girl had said, he made his explanation with such a frank, unembarrassed manner, that her fears were quieted; for it was plain that he had nothing upon his conscience. He said that he knew his mother would approve of his helping a friend in need, and not the less

if in so doing he should also help himself. It was a scheme of this kind that he had been talking over, the night before. Jost had to work very hard to make both ends meet, and Dietrich thought that if by putting some money into his scheme, he could help his old acquaintance to more profit with less labor, and at the same time gain by it himself, his mother would be the last to blame him.

Gertrude was a soft-hearted woman. She answered her son that if there was nothing wrong about this business, it was certainly a good thing to help Jost, who had received nothing from his father, not even tools for his trade, and who had seemed to have everything against him.

"With you it was very different, my boy," she said in conclusion. "Your father

left you an excellent business, and if you continue to work as you have done, you will be very well off in a few years. How kindly the good God has dealt with us, my son! We may hope for many happy days together!"

He agreed with her cordially, but he thought it as well not to unfold his plans to her any farther. He said to himself that he was not going to do anything wrong, certainly not; but his mother's ideas were a little old-fashioned, and she would n't understand his schemes. He would surprise her with his success.

CHAPTER VI.

LAME SABINA GIVES GOOD ADVICE.

Veronica's teacher, Sabina, had been a hunchback from her birth, and had become lame when still young; she had used crutches since she was twenty years old. Like many persons who suffer under physical disabilities, she had clever penetrating eyes, and on this day, she often raised them from the work which she was pursuing with indefatigable industry, to glance at her pupil, who sat opposite. Veronica was at work on the same piece which she

had had at home on the previous night, that night which she had passed in such sad forbodings.

After many inquiring glances, Sabina at last said thoughtfully:

"I'm puzzled about you, Veronica. That piece of work you are upon, is wonderfully well done; every stitch is perfectly even, the cloth and the silk are as white as snow; yet you must have done most of it at night, for yesterday afternoon you were not nearly so far along. Whatever you put your hand to, succeeds. Yet your eyebrows grow more and more scowling every day, and your eyes blaze out as if there were a thunder-storm about. What ails you, child? You are the handsomest girl in all the country round when you have a pleasant expression; and you are

as tall and straight as a young fir-tree. Don't you know that?"

"What good does it do me?" asked Veronica, and scowled worse than ever.

"What good? if you did not have it you would know what it is worth," replied Sabina, quickly. "I can tell you that. Now smooth your forehead, Veronica, and listen to me. I will tell you something that will make you feel better and happier. An Industrial School has been established in Fohrensee and it is proposed to connect with it a work-room for women. They want a teacher and superintendent, and have offered me the place, but I am not strong enough for it. I have told them that you are fully equal to me in skill and knowledge of the work, and a hundred times my superior in freshness and strength

and executive ability. There is no doubt that the place is at your disposal. You can lead the life of a lady, Veronica. Your fortune is made."

For the first time since Sabina began to speak, Veronica raised her eyes from her work. She shook her head sadly and said,

"Not my fortune."

"'Not my fortune!'" repeated Sabina angrily, "when I tell you this place is yours! Your fortune is made."

"I cannot grasp the fortune that is offered me," said the girl, and bent over her work again.

Sabina's searching glance seemed to try to penetrate her inmost thought.

"What sort of an expression is that you are using, Veronica? Where did you

learn that? I never expected to hear such words from your lips. It is not like you. What put that into your head, child?"

"I will tell you something of my experience, and then you will understand why I use this expression," said Veronica quietly. "When I was only a little girl I learned a motto which ran thus:

'Fortune stands ready, full in sight;
He wins, who knows to grasp it right.'

I saw that 'fortune' was something good to have, and I wanted to find out how it could be grasped. I asked Cousin Judith, and she told me it must be grasped like everything else with our hands, that is to say, through work. From that time forward I was eager for work as other children are for play, and the older I grow,

the more I strive for the good fortune that can be grasped by work. Even on Sundays I often go to my room to sew, and I shut my door, for my mother does not like to see me sew then. I work on and on, just as long as I can sit at it, even into the night; sometimes till one and two o'clock in the morning; yet I do not find the fortune I want. When my hands are busy, my thoughts wander where they will, and I must follow them. But they do not lead to 'fortune,' but only farther away from it. This offer may bring me a fortune in money and position, but that is not the fortune I want. 'Fortune' for me, means happiness."

Sabina had not lost a word of this sad story.

"Yes, yes, I understand you, Veronica,

she said sympathizingly. "I know something of this too. Judith told you the truth, but only one half the truth. Fortune is grasped by the hands, it is true; but the Fortune which you long for, that is, Happiness, is to be gained in other ways besides. I will tell you an instructive little story, and if you will take the trouble to grasp it, not with your hands, but with your thoughts and understanding, you will be able to work it out for yourself and get some profit from it. It is part of the story of my own life. I have had so much the same experience as yours that I cannot help hoping that what I found good for myself, may prove good for you."

"When I was about your age, Veronica, I was so unhappy that I cried myself to

sleep every night. Can you guess why? No, for one understands only the sufferings that he has himself experienced, and cannot imagine those of others. Well, it was because I was a hunchback! I remember as if it were yesterday, when I first came to a perception of my misfortune; when I first learned that I was different from other children, and must remain as one apart, all my life. We were all coming out of school one day, and a little quarrel arose between us children, and one of them said to me in a scornful tone, 'Hold your tongue, Sabina, you're only a hunchback.' From that day I never knew a happy moment, and I grew timid and avoided every one; if I saw any one looking at me, I thought he was scoffing at me because I was a hunchback. I kept away

from other children, for if one of them laughed, I fancied she was laughing at my deformed shoulders. If any stranger was kind to me, I thought that it was because my hunch had not yet been seen, and that as soon as it was, kindness would be changed for contempt. I looked at the figure of every one I met; all were straight except myself. I felt that I was the most miserable creature in the world, and I saw no hope of ever being otherwise all my life long. Once one of the school children died, and all her schoolmates walked in the funeral procession to the church. I would not walk with them, but hid myself among the grown people; for every one was looking at the children and I wanted to escape observation. I heard one woman say to another: 'It is

lucky the child's mother has so much to do; she will have no time to think about her sorrow, and she will get over it the sooner.' Then it came to me like a ray of hope, that if I had work to do, I might forget my sorrow too. I must have work. That very day I begged my mother to let me learn to work. She was pleased, and sent me to take lessons in sewing, and I followed it up till I could do all sorts of fine work, and had as much employment as I could wish. I often heard people say, 'How finely Sabina is getting on!' But how do you think it was with my spirits? Just as it is with yours now, Veronica. Oh yes, you needn't look at me so with your great eyes. I know exactly what you are thinking. You think that my trouble never can have been equal to

yours. People always think that their own sorrows are the worst. I sat and sewed just as you do—early and late; my work was perfect; I had no rival. I knew that it was good, and I rejoiced over it in a half-hearted way; but what good did it do me after all? The thought that I was a hunchback, was always in my mind. It was like a stream of troubled water flowing through my heart; it spoiled everything. 'Always deformed, never like other girls,' I never forgot it for a moment. So it went on till I was about twenty years old, and then came on the trouble in my foot, and I was confined to my bed for many months. Oh! how bitterly I suffered! Was every misfortune to fall on me alone?' I thought. How could I foresee that this very trouble would turn out to be good fortune for me?"

" The doctor came to see me constantly; he took as much interest in my case as if I could have paid him handsomely.

He noticed that I was industrious, that I did not lie idle even when I was in great pain. It pleased him to find me always with work in my hand. When at last the acute attack was over, and the doctor told me that this would be his last visit, he told me also that I was lame for life. At first I could not walk at all; but bye and bye I learned to use my crutches. When I offered the doctor the money that was due him for his attendance, he said we would not speak of that; that we both had to work, but with this difference, that he was sound and whole, while I was not. He took my hand kindly, saying that it was hard for me not to be

able to take any amusement after working hard all the week; not to go out with the others on Sunday; and that if I cared for reading, his wife had a great many nice books which she would be glad to lend me, and they would make the Sundays less tedious. I did not really care for reading; I preferred sewing as you do, but I accepted the doctor's offer and went to his house. His wife was very kind and gave me a book at once, bidding me come as soon as I had finished it and get another. I began to read the very next Sunday, and I became so deeply interested that I scarcely laid the book down all day, and even during the week I took it up as often as I could find a spare moment. It was an account of foreign countries and nations; how they lived, and their manners

and customs. I was particularly interested to read about how the women were treated in different places; how in some countries they are sold and bartered for cattle or wool or cloth, and how they belong to their husbands just as if they were furniture, and their husbands can treat them just as they please, as we do cats or dogs. And in some places, it said, a wife has to be burned when her husband dies, because she is only a part of him and has no value of her own after his death. Oh! how many strange things there are in the world, to be sure! I became hungry and thirsty for knowledge. The doctor's wife lent me one book after another, and in each there was something new and wonderful. I learned how terrible the condition of women had been everywhere until our own

Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, and taught that one soul was as much worth as another, all equal, man and woman, lord and servant; that every individual must be free, one as well as another; and that two people should be joined together only by love, and not as a matter of ownership. But even now-a-days there are still countries and islands where men make nothing of killing and eating each other, and the women are bought and sold like goods. It is only where the influence of Christianity has penetrated, that there is true equality of womanhood. You can imagine the flood of new ideas that crowded in upon me as I read, and I assure you that I was able to forget sometimes for many days that I was a hunchback, and when I did remem-

ber it, the thought had lost its sting. I dwelt upon the many privations and sufferings of others, till they seemed to outweigh my own trouble so that it dwindled in my estimation ; and gradually I began to see the good side of my lot. How independently I could live supporting myself; what a wealth of interest was opened to me through my reading, and in fact how fortunate I was, and blessed beyond many another! Yes, Veronica, I can assure you that I am now a happy woman, with a heart filled with gratitude to the good God for the blessings he has sent me. And so I say to you, my child, from the fulness of my own experience, that you have no right to go about looking like a thunder-cloud; you with all the freshness and beauty of your young life!

Tell me do you owe our Lord God something or is He in debt to you? Have you nothing to thank him for? Others can see how much you have to look forward to. Get yourself together, girl, and try to give your thoughts another direction."

"I should be only too glad to do so," said Veronica, who had listened intently to every word that Sabina had said. "Have you any such book as you describe, that you can lend me to read?"

Sabina was well pleased at this request. She had a book close at hand, which she had just finished reading, and from which she expected great things for the young girl. Veronica was moved by Sabina's glowing words, to believe that her future might be happier, and that the clouds

of despondency which had overshadowed her, were about to be dispersed.

She lost no time, for she was in earnest. She opened the book that very evening, and began to read. But her sanguine expectations were not fulfilled. She read the words, she understood their meaning; but it was as if she heard them at a distance and through them all, louder than all else, sounded something in her ears and in her heart that drowned them. It was the flow of the troubled waters, as Sabina had said. The waves rose higher; their noise increased, until Veronica lost all hearing and understanding of what she was reading. Still she persevered; perhaps bye-and-bye it would come right. Alas! was not that the house door opening and shutting again so softly late in the

night? She flung the book aside; walked rapidly back and forth in her chamber for awhile, then unfolded her sewing, and worked steadily on and on, until the morning broke and a new day called her to its duties.

CHAPTER VII.

A THUNDER CLAP.

Blasi, the lounger, stood in his doorway in the clear sunshine of this lovely summer morning, both hands plunged deep into his pockets as was his wont, and looked about him as if to see whether everything in the outer world was the same as yesterday.

Judith came out to the well, carrying her water-jug on her head.

"Look out, Blasi, you are losing something," she cried. Blasi looked on the ground, turned about, and searched behind and before.

"I don't see anything," he said, and stuffed his hands deeper into his pockets.

"It's always so with me," said Judith, "when I've lost anything, I can't see it."

"Oh ho, you're making a fool of me again!"

"That's all the thanks I get for telling you that you are losing something, and I was just going to make you a present that is worth more than five francs to a fellow like you."

"What is it? Show it to me," said Blasi, with more animation.

"First I will tell you something, and then you shall have it," replied Judith. "Look here, Blasi, my sainted father used to say, "If you keep your hands out of your pockets they will get full, but if you keep them in, your pockets will be em-

pty." Now, both your hands are in your pockets, so all that ought to go in is running to waste. Isn't that so?"

"Well, suppose it is," said Blasi, angrily. "Now give me what you promised me."

"I gave it to you this very minute. I said you'd better take your hands out of your pockets, and then your earnings would run in. That's good advice and worth more than five francs.

"What stuff! No one ever knows how to take you," grumbled Blasi.

"It wouldn't help you to take me, if you did not take your hands out too," said Judith, "but never mind, I have really something good for you," and Judith motioned to him to come nearer. "Would you like to have a nice well-washed shirt for Sunday? I will do one up for you if you will tell me something."

That was an offer worth listening to. Sunday was a wretched day for Blasi, for when he had turned his two shirts and worn them both on both sides, he had never a clean one for Sunday. He had no one to wash for him. His mother was dead, and his father had enough else to spend for, without the washing for a grown-up son. Blasi's money went for other things than washing, and he was not fond of doing it for himself.

The proposition was therefore very apropos. "Come a little nearer to the well; no one knows who may be behind those trees. Now listen; Can you tell me what is going wrong with Dietrich? He never whistles now, he never laughs, and his mother looks so sad, and she rarely speaks even to answer when spoken to. Something has happened to Dietrich."

"Yes, and keeps on happening; all sorts of things, too. But Jost can tell you more than I can. They sit together in the Rehbock half the night and more, too; long after everybody else has gone, there they sit in the little back room. At first they do just as other people do, they drink a little and then a little more, and Dietrich pays. But that's nothing to what it costs him afterwards. They do something with paper, he and Jost. Sometimes it is a lottery and then again something that they call speculating. I don't understand anything about it. Somebody comes over from Fohrensee and explains it to them. He does not belong there; but I guess you have seen him; he has fiery red hair, and red beard and red face. He has business in Fohren-

see once a week, and lives the rest of the time down in the city; and he arranges everything down there, and then brings the account of gains and losses up to them; but it's a good deal more loss than gain. Dietrich puts in more money every time. Jost has nothing to put in but promises. He tells Dietrich all the time that presently the winnings will begin to flow in, and says that at first a fellow must expect to lose, so as to win all the more in the end, and that bye-and-bye it will all come back; with interest, of course. The red-haired man says yes to it all. Whenever I want to put something in, and ask Dietrich to lend me a little to try with, Jost acts as if he were the lord and master of the whole concern, and 'donkey' is the mildest name he calls me. I am

just waiting though, till I can trip him up, and I'll do it with a vengeance too, so that he won't forget it all his life long."

"Now that is a good idea," said Judith. "You'd better tell him then, that you do it to pay your debts, and that it would be well for him to follow your example. Now you have told me enough. Bring me your shirt on Saturday, and I'll wash it for you."

Judith lifted her water-jug and was turning away, but Blasi detained her.

"Just wait one moment, I want to ask you a question. Do you think she will have him?"

The question seemed to interest Judith, for she stood stock still.

"Who? whom? what do you mean?"

"I mean Veronica and Jost. Do you

think she will take him?" As Blasi spoke he came slowly nearer to Judith. "He has been saying some things lately, that made me think so."

"If you know anything more stupid than that, I should like to hear it," cried Judith very angry indeed; but she did not move away, for she wanted to hear all that Blasi had to say.

"I know what you mean," he went on, "but I am not so very stupid as you think. It certainly means something, when she is so changed. Jost says that she knows all that Dietrich has been about, and she is hot with anger against him because he has not told her about it himself. Jost says that if he only mentions Dietrich's name before her she looks like a wild-cat in a moment, and he says too that he has

noticed for some time, that she has no objection to letting Dietrich see that she can get along very well without his help, and you know that she is capable of anything when she's angry."

"Well, this was the one drop wanting!" said Judith, and shouldering her jug she went off, snorting with anger, in such a rage that Blasi stood looking after her in stupid amazement, and muttered,

"I wonder if she wants to get him, too!"

Judith walked along, talking aloud to herself,

"Yes, she is! she is! she is capable of anything when she is angry!"

Now Judith had looked upon her neighbor's boy from his childhood up, as if he belonged to her. He was her prime. favorite and she meant to do well by him

She liked Veronica because she was such a steady girl at her needle, and because she would have nothing to say to any one but Dietrich. This very reserve however, was rather distasteful to Judith as regarded herself, but she liked it towards others. She had planned it all out that Dietrich should marry Veronica soon after the confirmation, that they should set up a pretty little establishment, and be her beloved neighbors. She meant to be their intimate friend and helper, to go freely in and out of their house, and to stand god-mother now and then. She would leave her property to the little ones. Now all this fine air-castle was overthrown and all her plans spoiled. Judith bounced violently into the kitchen and set her jug down with such a bang that the water spirted up into the air.

"And no one can get a word out of her, either; it is exactly as if all the oil had been burned out." This last remark referred to Gertrude, who had greatly altered during the last few months. She had no longer the cheerful expression that she had always been noted for. She had grown very quiet and silent. She even avoided her old and well-tried friend Judith, and if the latter showed a disposition to talk about her household matters or her children's future, Gertrude would give her to understand that she had no time to stop to talk.

Gertrude knew where Dietrich spent his evenings. She had expostulated with him about it more than once. He had answered that he must keep on there for awhile, till a certain undertaking which

he had started with Jost was fairly under way. He assured her that this affair was certain to turn out all right, and that she herself would be surprised and satisfied at the result. He knew from some one who understood it, that it could not fail. He had to draw large sums several times for himself and also for Jost, but he was sanguine that in a short time it would all be paid back, with interest. Gertrude did not pretend to understand the business, but she saw that Dietrich believed it to be safe and profitable, and she knew that her son would not deceive her. Still she was haunted daily by a growing uneasiness, which was not diminished when she perceived that Veronica was gradually drawing away from her.

This state of things had all come about

since that morning when the girl's beseeching words had fallen unheeded on the mother's ears; or at least Veronica believed them to have been unheeded, since they had worked no change in Dietrich's behavior.

Why it was that every day as evening came on, she felt so miserably anxious, Gertrude herself could scarcely understand. Poor Gertrude!

One night after she had gone to her room she heard her son leave the house with hasty steps. It had become a regular thing now. She had often said to herself, "Ah! how much longer will this go on?" but she tried hard to believe that it would soon come to an end, and her son would resume his former orderly and happy mode of life. But this evening

she was so anxious that she could not stay in her bedroom. She went down into the garden.

The moon peeped out from between the flying clouds, and shone peacefully down upon the trees and the neat flower-beds. Gertrude seated herself upon a small bench under the apple tree, and gazed about the garden, all illuminated by the moonbeams. She had planted it all and cared for it with her own hands. She had done this as she did everything, carefully and with great painstaking, and it was all for her son's sake. His should be the pleasure and the profit of all Why could he not be happy in it now? Why was she so worried about him? Dietrich was walking in steep and dangerous paths; that she was sure of, but he

knew the straight road and would not his steps turn back to it again? Her thoughts went back to the days when her little Dieterli loved good and orderly conduct; it could not be that he had lost his love for it, that he did not still feel that in the right conduct of life lies inward and outward blessing. She recalled the evening of the day when her husband was borne from the house to his burial. She had taken the children by the hand and, stupefied with pain, was about to put them to bed, but Dieterli objected, saying,

"No, mother, no; it is not good to go to bed before you say your prayers."

Did her boy ever pray now? "Oh, Dieterli, my son, you are wandering away, but you know the way home," she said to

herself, and she folded her hands in prayer, for her habit was to lay all her troubles before God, her Supporter and Comforter.

At this moment, she heard through the stillness loud shouts and cries, first at a distance, then nearer and nearer, until they grew into a wild tumult. Then many of the voices seemed to scatter in different directions while some sounded as if approaching the garden. A vague fear seized Gertrude. Three fellows shouting and calling, passed on the other side of the hedge; she recognized one of the voices.

"Jost," she cried feebly, "Jost, what is it? where is Dietrich?"

There was no answer; Jost did not or would not. hear. He ran faster than be-

fore, and the second fellow ran too. The last one paused a little; it was Blasi. He said hastily:

"He isn't coming yet awhile. You can go to bed;" and was making off.

"Oh do tell me what has happened," said Gertrude, white with terror. "Don't leave me so, but tell me, Blasi, why Dietrich hasn't come home with the rest of you?"

Blasi had too much respect for Dietrich's mother to run away from her when she put a direct question to him, although he would fain have escaped. He came close to the hedge, and replied,

"There has been a row at the Rehbock. Two men were killed. Some one stole the cattle dealer's money bag —"

"Is Dietrich killed? Speak out!" broke in Gertrude, trembling.

"No; he struck about him bravely, till one of the fellows got enough of it, and lay dead on the ground; and then he made off."

With this Blasi ran on.

Gertrude mounted wearily to her room as if her last day was come. She sat down upon her bed, and when the morning light filled the room, still she sat there listening in trembling anxiety, as she had listened through all the long night; in vain. Dietrich had not come home in the night; he did not come in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS KIND.

In all Tannenegg and Fohrensee, nothing was talked of but the affair of the night before. Never was such excitement known. In every house, at every corner, in all the roads, groups of people stood talking it over; each telling what he knew.

Everyone asked questions, and no one listened to the answers. Such a fight at the Rehbock! It began over the card-table. The cattle-dealer from Fohrensee was on his way home with his bag full of money, when he stopped in at the Rehbock,

and joined the game. When the dispute broke out, his big fists took their share in the fray. Not until two of the party lay for dead on the ground, did the brawling cease and the combatants begin to cool. Then the cattle-dealer discovered that his bag full of gold was gone, and raised a fearful alarm.

Then the red-haired man from Fohrensee shouted into the midst of the excited crowd,

"Don't let any one get away. Run after them! That's the only way to find out the thief!"

This man had not taken part in the fight, but had mixed with the crowd, trying to pacify them, and to restore quiet.

His advice was useless. A good many had already gone. First of all, Dietrich

had disappeared; then several fellows ran after him, and then all the rest went together.

On the way home, Jost had told his companions that Dietrich had made off with himself, and that he, Jost, had told him when he saw him going that there was doubtless good reason for his wishing to be out of the way. But in truth Jost had not said any such thing to Dietrich!

One of the men had run at once for the doctor, and the doctor had come in the night to the Rehbock, and had found that the two men were not dead after all. So he had given orders that they should be let alone till they had slept off the effect of their carouse.

In the morning, all those who had been at the Rehbock the night before, were

called together; and every one denied stoutly having any knowledge of the cattle-dealer's money, and all were ready to be searched in proof of their innocence. Dietrich alone was not there; he had vanished, no one knew whither. Some one whispered, and then it was softly repeated, then louder and louder, that Dietrich would not have taken himself off if he had had a clear conscience; and although nobody seriously believed Dietrich capable of a disgraceful act, yet after awhile it seemed to grow more likely, especially when it became known that he had lost a great deal of money in betting and gambling, and was unable to pay back what he had lost. And many shook their heads and said, "How easy it is for a man to be drawn into evil ways if he once begins to go down hill!"

Where Dietrich had gone, was now the important question. No trace of him had been discovered from the moment of his disappearance. The cattle-dealer left no stone unturned to find him, but he could get no clue to his whereabouts. He had entered complaints against Dietrich, and hoped that the hands of the law would succeed in getting track of him. But it was all in vain. Gradually, no one knew how, a report got about that Dietrich had fled to Australia, and would never come back. Little by little every one came to believe it.

Except one. One single person in all Tannenegg was bold enough to swim against this stream of suspicion. This was Judith. Not timidly and in secret, but aloud, at all times and in all places, she declared decidedly,

"There 's not one word of truth in what you all say. It 's a lie from beginning to end. Dietrich has no more stolen than I have, and I need n't say more than that. I 'll ferret this thing out, till I find the true culprit, or my name 's not Judith."

The first thing to do was to get a clear account of the whole affair; for although she had already heard it told a dozen times, it had always been among other people, who were continually interrupting and asking questions, and were too anxious to hear the end, to wait for the full account of the beginning. So she decided to apply to Blasi, who, as he had been on the spot, must know all about it. But she had to hunt him up; for since that unlucky evening he had kept himself out of sight. She placed her bucket under the spout at

the well, and then took a turn about the kitchen garden behind the sexton's cottage. Blasi stood in the back doorway, just as he was in the habit of standing in the front doorway, only instead of holding his face up as if to catch any agreeable odors that might be floating about, he stood to-day with drooping head, gazing sadly at the uncared-for garden.

"What's amiss, Blasi?" asked Judith, sharply, coming upon him before he was aware of her approach.

"Nothing; if you know of anything we will share it," said Blasi sullenly.

"Well, perhaps I know something that it would not be a bad thing for you to share with me. Perhaps it's worth while for some one who has learned it by the sweat of her brow, to tell you that vegetables can

be made to grow in a garden, instead of nettles, which you seem to cultivate."

"I don't care what grows anywhere; one thing is as good as another to me, now that Dietrich has gone. There's nothing to do in the evening now. I've half a mind to go after him."

"Go where? do you know where he is?"

"I don't, myself, but Jost does, and I know that Jost is expecting to hear from him. Though he does call me stupid, I have my eye on him," said Blasi, with angry emphasis. "And I know it was Jost who advised Dietrich to run away and hide, though he didn't mean to let me know. Oh, I'm no fool!"

Judith nodded assentingly, as if Blasi's information confirmed her own suspicions.

"Here, Blasi, here 's a little something for you. Now I want you to tell me exactly how this thing happened, from the very beginning; and don't leave out a single thing. I want to hear the whole story, connectedly."

"You may be sure I will," said Blasi, weighing the silver piece which Judith had given him affectionately in his hand. "You see they were all together in the little back room at first; the red-haired man and Jost and Dietrich, and when I went in I noticed at once that something had happened that our two did n't like; for Dietrich sat with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, and Jost was swearing roundly. Presently Jost said, 'We will double our bets, Dietrich, and perhaps the luck will turn.' Dietrich,

only groaned. Then the red-haired fellow said, 'Come, let's go down and play cards with the the cattle-dealer, and take a glass of something that will raise your spirits.'"

"Dietrich never used to gamble; nor to drink when he was not thirsty;" cried Judith angrily.

"Pooh! When every one is playing cards, a fellow can't hold off and say he won't join, and as for the drink, Dietrich has washed down a good deal of vexation with it lately, and he took it powerfully too, I can tell you. Well, the play began, and it went on fast. I noticed that the red man looked mightily pleased, and urged them all on, and the louder the cattle-dealer scolded, the more the red man filled up his glass. When the quarrel came to blows, I heard the red-head

call out to the cattle-dealer, 'Come over here, you 'll soon silence them.' So he kept exciting him, and he struck out well with his great fists. The red-head mixed in the crowd, and stuck close to the cattle-dealer, but he never struck a blow himself; of course not, such a gentleman as he is! I did not see Dietrich knock the Fohrensee fellow down, but just when the storm was most furious, I saw Dietrich run out, and Jost after him, and I thought I saw Jost give Dietrich something. I ran out after them, and I heard Jost advising Dietrich to make off as fast as he could, and send him word where he hid himself. When I came up to them, Jost pushed me back; I could n't get a word with Dietrich, who ran right off, and Jost pulled me into the house. There the noise was increas-

ing every minute, for the cattle-dealer had discovered that his money-bag was gone, and red-head screamed out like a mad-man, that nobody must get away, and everybody must be searched. When they found that Dietrich had gone, the cattle-man started off after him, and some others too, and then they all broke up. Now you know all that I know. Nothing else happened; except that I went for the doctor, who said the two men were not dead. When Jost tells Dietrich that, why, there 's nothing to prevent his coming back. That is, unless there 's something else."

"What do you mean by 'something else'?" said Judith sharply. "But there — you 're all alike. One repeats what another has said, till you all get to saying the same thing and then of course you believe

it. A nice set of friends you are — the whole of you. I mean to stir up the ground under you all until I find out where the truth is. Then you can begin to stare with the others, you blind mole!" and Judith suddenly walked off as if the earth were burning beneath her angry feet.

Blasi understood neither her words nor her anger. He looked after her, shook his head rather sadly, and said to himself,

"Women folk are a very foolish folk."

Home sped the "foolish" Judith; put on her Sunday garments and started on her journey. If ever she had a project in her head, she did not wait till to-morrow to put it into execution. And to-day she was bent on giving the cattle dealer a

piece of her mind. She paused a moment when she came to Gertrude's house, then went on her way, saying half aloud,

"No, I'll say nothing to her, since she says nothing to me. If 'mum's' the word I can use it as well as she."

Judith was pained that Gertrude had not from the beginning talked with her of her troubles, for Judith was one who liked to give and receive sympathy. Veronica too was much too reticent to please her kind-hearted neighbor who could never get a word with her about what was going on. Veronica and Gertrude were both very silent by nature, about anything that touched them deeply, especially in sorrow. On the first day after the terrible blow that had befallen them, they talked it all over, and wept together, to ease their

hearts of the first misery. Then Gertrude said,

"Dietrich has sinned and he must make atonement, but he has not stolen; I am sure that my son is not a thief." And Veronica had responded promptly,

"If every one in the whole world said that he had stolen that money, I should not listen; for I know he is no thief."

As soon as it became known that Dietrich was gone, letters and bills came pouring in upon the poor widow. Her son had borrowed large sums of money and had lost even more at play. She soon found that not only all her husband's savings, but also the house and the business were deeply encumbered. She talked things over with the workman who had been so many years in her employ and asked if he

would help her carry on the business as he had done after her husband's death while Dietrich was still a child. The man was very angry with Dietrich for having thrown away the result of all those years of labor, and at first refused to have anything more to do with the business. He yielded at last, however, to Gertrude's urgent request, and consented to remain with her at least till the future prospects of the business could be decided upon; and Gertrude agreed that if it should prosper she would hand it over to him, in case Dietrich should not return within a certain time.

And so the mother set herself again to her task. She worked early and late; she seemed to have gained new strength and courage instead of being crushed down by this new burden.

It was curious to see how differently the two women nearest to Dietrich were affected by this trouble. Gertrude's countenance gradually resumed its customary look of cheerfulness and peace, while on Veronica's handsome features rested a heavy scowl which now seldom left her clouded brow. Yet she was almost an object of envy to all the young girls of the neighborhood, and no wonder; for she was an attractive sight to all eyes, with her neat, well-fitting clothes, that always looked new and fresh, and her air of strength and activity. Not a few of the strangers who came to Fohrensee, made inquiries about her, wondering where she could have come from; for they noticed the marked difference between her and the other women of the place. The work

which passed through her hands, even if it were most elaborately embroidered, was never crumpled nor soiled, but looked as fresh as if it had not been handled at all. She could obtain any price she chose to set upon her work, and everything she did found ready sale. Moreover, she had been appointed to the place of which Sabina had spoken to her. She was at the head of the great Industrial School for women, where she received so handsome a salary, that she was in a fair way to the accumulation of a nice little fortune. It was common to hear it said of her, "She is really a lady! she can have whatever she pleases," and it was often added, "If I were in her shoes, I wouldn't go about with a face like a thirty days' storm, as she does, when she can be a gentleman's wife whenever she

chooses!" It had been proposed that Veronica should go to live in the school-buildings at Fohrensee. But she did not accept the offer; she could not leave her mother alone in this time of trouble. Every evening after her work she returned to Gertrude's cottage.

During the long summer days it was easy for Veronica to get home before the twilight was over. But when the days grew shorter, dusk came on even before she could reach the wood. One bright Saturday afternoon, late in August, Veronica had delayed longer than usual in the work-room, to clear all away and leave things in perfect order for Sunday.

She hurried up the hill road, not so much from fear of going through the wood alone, as from desire to spare Ger-

trude the anxiety of watching for her. Just before she reached the wood, she met Jost coming towards her. He held out his hand with a friendly smile, saying,

"I came to meet you; I thought it would be getting too dark for you to go alone through the forest; I can't let you go unprotected."

"You may spare yourself the pains," said Veronica shortly and crossed over to the other side of the road. Jost crossed too.

"Veronica," he began after a little while, "it is not nice of you to treat me as you have done since Dietrich went off. I know as well as you do, that he did wrong in running away from you without letting you know where he went to; but he may write yet, and meantime —"

"Don't say another word," interrupted Veronica; so decidedly that Jost was silent for awhile. She crossed the road again, and presently Jost did the same, and as he came up to her, he began again in a soft insinuating tone,

"Don't you see Veronica, that it isn't my fault that things have taken this turn? I often thought of you when Dietrich was risking so much money, and I used to say to him "think of her," for I knew how you would feel about it."

"Oh, you Judas!" cried Veronica, swelling with rage, and she sprang forward and ran on with all her might. Jost followed close at her heels. When she had passed through the wood, and had come out on the Tannenegg side, he said, in a flattering voice,

"Veronica, do you see how precious you are to me? I will protect you and take care of you even if you do not speak one kind word to me. I shall come to meet you every day, for I will not allow you to go through the wood alone. You may meet all sorts of people there and may sometimes be glad of my company. Bye-and-bye you will be convinced how much I care for you."

Veronica was now near the house. She hurried on and without once looking back, she sprang through the door and shut it fast behind her.

"You shall be tame enough before I have done with you," muttered Jost, and he bit his lips until the blood came.

Veronica stood still on the other side of the door until she heard his retreating

footsteps; then she opened it and went out again. She went over to the sexton's house. Blasi stood in the doorway, in a despondent attitude, with his hands in his pockets. He was brooding over the melancholy reflection that he had paid away the last penny of the coin that Judith had given him, for last evening's glass at the Rehbock, and that he had no credit. He saw no glimmer of hope in the prospect before him, and looked disconsolately at the ground. Suddenly Veronica stood before him. He stared at her with surprise.

"Blasi, will you do me a favor?" she asked in a friendly tone, "I will return it sometime when you need help."

Here was an unexpected chance. He opened his eyes yet wider with delight.

"Tell me what it is, Veronica," he said;

"I will go through fire and water for you."

"It is only to go through the wood for me, to-morrow evening, and every evening till the days grow longer again. Will you? You can have your evening glass afterwards at my expense."

Blasi stood speechless; staring at Veronica, who waited for his answer.

"Why; do you want two of us?" he said presently, "I don't see why. Jost is going too, for you told him to go and meet you every evening."

Veronica's dark eyes flashed forth a fire that dazzled poor Blasi.

"So! I told him to go, did I? Who told you such a thing as that?"

"Jost said so himself at the Rehbock last evening, before a room full of people; and some of them said that you were

going to prove that you could get along very well without the fellow that ran away."

Veronica flushed burning red.

"Tell Jost," she said, scornfully, "that if he is clever in nothing else he is a master liar. I would tell him myself, but I will never speak to him again. Will you come for me tomorrow or not, Blasi?" she had turned to leave him.

"Why of course, if that's the way it is about Jost, I'll come. You may count on me," he replied gleefully. She held out her hand to him, and was gone.

The next evening, as Blasi was walking at his ease, towards the wood, he met Jost hurrying along from another direction.

"Where may you be going?" asked Jost peremptorily.

"I am going to meet Veronica; she

engaged me to," answered Blasi, not at all unwilling to make known his errand.

"Well, you are a dunderhead to take a joke like that for sober earnest," said Jost, bursting into a loud laugh. "Hadn't you sense enough to see that she was making a fool of you? We had a good laugh together about it last night, she and I, and she said she had a mind to make you go all winter long to Fohrensee, to fetch her; and that you would never find out that she was making sport of you. She seems to have made a good beginning."

Jost laughed again immoderately, and Blasi began to waver.

"If I only knew which of you was telling a lie;" he said, and stood still to think it over. Suddenly he started forward on the full run, for it occured to him that he

could decide by Veronica's air when he met her, whether she had cheated him or not. Jost saw that Blasi was determined not to give up his enterprise so he turned about, and disappeared among the bushes; for he had no desire to have Blasi see how Veronica treated him.

When Blasi met Veronica, her face had so pleasant and bright a look, that the lad was struck with her beauty. It was not the look of one who was making a fool of him. Veronica was sincere. She talked kindly with him all the way home, more kindly than he had ever thought she could talk, and when they parted, she said persuasively,

"You 'll come tomorrow, and every day, won 't you Blasi?"

Then she pressed a piece of money into

his hand, and thanked him for his kindness so gratefully, that it seemed as if he had conferred a great favor on her, instead of having received payment for service rendered.

As the young man turned away, a new set of ideas took possession of his mind. For the first time in his life, he felt a desire to use the money that he held in his hand, for something better than drink. He recollected that he had no necktie on, and he was conscious of looking slovenly and dirty. That was not the way for a fellow to look who was going to be seen walking with the pretty Veronica along the high-road. He would buy a neck-tie in the morning; he had money enough for that. Then his thoughts ran on still farther. Veronica had not spoken to him

in this friendly way for many a long year. It was not to make fun of him, Jost was a liar as she had said; else why did he run away instead of going with him to meet her? No, he wouldn't be taken in by that fellow, any longer. As they walked along she had asked him all sorts of questions about himself; what his business was, and how he succeeded in it and so on. He had not been able to answer very satisfactorily about his business, for since Confirmation, three years before, he had only been waiting for something to turn up. He had had nothing to do except to ring the bell at eleven o'clock, and then stand in the door-way of his house until it was time to ring it again at four. Then towards evening he always went to the Rehbock to hear the news. All this ap-

peared in a new light before his eyes, now that Veronica had inquired about his occupation. Then she had encouraged him so sympathetically to try to get something to do, and promised to be of service to him if she could. It was exactly as if she had an especial interest in his welfare. Why did she concern herself about him? Suddenly a light broke through his darkness.

"Dietrich is gone, and is not likely to come back," he said to himself, "she detests Jost; and women always do the very thing you least expect them to; I've heard that a hundred times. She is after me! Good heavens!" he called out in his surprise as this idea seized him. "A fellow must spruce up! I will take the first step this very day."

The idea which had seized Blasi's mind that he was to take Dietrich's place with Veronica, suggested a farther plan. He decided immediately to become a saddler too, and before he went into his own house, he turned back and sought Gertrude's garden.

Gertrude's workman was walking up and down, for recreation; for he never went to the tavern. Blasi went to him and opened his mind; he wanted to be a saddler, and to learn the trade from him.

The man was quite willing; he bethought himself that it would be rather an agreeable change to have a young fellow to talk to, instead of merely sitting all day by the side of the silent widow. He said he would speak to his employer, and Blasi could come on the morrow. He

was sure she would agree, for she generally took his opinion about the business.

"You see, Blasi," said he pompously, "if I were not there to look after things, they would all go to ruin. In fact there are only two ways to save this business; either Dietrich must come back and quickly too, and take hold of the business better than he ever did before, or else it must fall into my hands entirely, and I will take all the risks and all the profits."

"There may be yet a third way; who knows?" said Blasi, significantly, and he winked so mysteriously first with one eye and then with the other, that the saddler said to himself, "I guess he's been at the Rehbock."

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER GERTRUDE ALSO GIVES GOOD ADVICE.

The cold, dismal December days had come. It was always long after dark now, before Veronica got home; but she never had to hurry, for fear of going through the wood alone, for there stood Blasi always ready at the turf hut on the edge of Fohrensee, just where the houses ceased and it began to be lonely. If it was fine, he was walking up and down before the hut; if it stormed, he was standing under the shelter of the roof. He was never absent and he never came too late.

Yet he was busy all day long, and had to run half the way to get to the hut in time. His master did not let him off one moment before the appointed day's work was over. Blasi's application to learn the saddler's trade had been favorably received by Gertrude and he had set to work at once. Now that he worked from morning till night he never had time to put his hands in his pockets, and the saddler kept him up to the mark, proud of showing how well he himself understood the business. Blasi was contented, and more than contented with his life; he had a new and very happy consciousness of being of use, and he had risen in his own estimation. He felt like a man of property, almost like a gentleman. By the time he had finished his day's work, and hurried down to

Fohrensee and walked back again, he was so tired that he was ready to go to bed directly; he had no time nor desire to loaf. And so it came about that when Veronica wished to give him his piece of money every evening he objected; for he said he did not want to be paid; he preferred to have his services accepted on the ground of friendship. Veronica consented to accept them on that ground, but from time to time she would say, "Blasi, this is your birthday," or "To-day is the cherry-festival, I should like to make you a little present," or "I have had extra work to-day, and I should like to give you part of the extra pay, for if you had not been coming for me, I could not have waited to do it, so it is fairly yours;" and each time she pressed into his hand such

a large piece of money that he soon had a considerable sum laid away. Then one day she gave him a silk handkerchief; and another day half-a-dozen new shirts, white as snow; and then again a package of handkerchiefs hemmed and ready for use; and all this increase of property raised his standard of living, and excited his ambition.

The night before Christmas, Veronica was late in coming home. It was dark and stormy. She had been delayed at the school, making preparations for leaving everything in order for the holiday.

When she came into the sitting-room she found her mother at work by lamplight, mending a ragged old mail-bag. Advancing years had told upon Gertrude; and although industrious as ever, she

could not work as easily as she once did.

"Oh mother, I cannot let you do that heavy piece of work," said Veronica, as soon as she saw what her mother was about. "Did n't I tell you that I would come home in time to dress the house for Christmas, and now you have not only done all that, but you are at work on that old mail-bag. I can 't bear to have you do so. Why won't you let me do something for you, and take a little rest yourself. You look so tired."

"You need the evening to rest in too, dear child, after working steadily all day," said Gertrude affectionately. "And I am very glad when there is a piece of work like this that I can do. I want him to find everything as it used to be, when he

comes home. I think that with care and industry I can manage so that I shall not be obliged to give up this house while he is away. I am sure it will be a great comfort to him to find that he still has his home. And besides I feel that it will help him to begin life anew, and bring him back to his old right-minded way of thinking. Oh, if he would only come home!"

"Mother, mother, that is no reason why you should work beyond your strength. You have taken care of me all these long years, and now it is fairly my turn to take care of you. Do not worry about the house, dear; I have made an arrangement with the cattle-dealer. When you told me that he threatened to take it, I went to him and got him to let me settle with him instead. He was very glad that I wanted

it, for he said that he didn 't see what good it would be to him, and he gave me my time about paying for it."

"Is that true, Veronica?" said Gertrude, and a happy smile stole over her face. "You do not know what a load you have taken from my heart! Oh, you are good and brave! If I could only see you look happy, how glad I should be! If I could find out how to make you happy! I would do anything in the world for you, if I only knew how!"

"There is no use in thinking about it, mother dear. Happiness is not for me. It may be for others, but not for me." Veronica spoke with strong emotion. "I have worked and struggled for it ever since I can remember anything, but all in vain. Cousin Judith told me that work

was the way to fortune, and that 'fortune' meant whatever one wanted most; and so I worked, always, even when I did not know what it was that I wanted most. Afterwards when I learned that for me happiness was the best fortune, I worked on, for I wanted to be happy, but I was not. I always brooded over my work, thinking of all the unpleasant and troublesome things that had happened. Then Sabina told me how, when she was terribly unhappy about her deformity, she had found relief in books, in reading," and Veronica went on to tell how Sabina had sent her delightful books and how she had tried to drive away her own sorrow by the new interests which she found in them. "But you see," she added with a sigh, "it did not help me; nothing helps

me. When I read, I was still unhappy. What difference did it make to me, all that was written in the books; it did not make my troubles less. The old thoughts came right in and left me no peace. Even while I was reading I could not fix my mind on the book, and when I laid the book down, I had gained nothing, but was as sad and hopeless as ever. Happiness is not for me, and the little motto upon my rose may be true for others; it is not true for me. I cannot 'grasp' the only 'fortune' I care for."

Veronica spoke passionately; with a vehemence that Gertrude had never before heard from her. Her strong, self-controlled nature had never before given way and found expression in words. Now the flood-gates were opened, the stream broke

through. Gertrude was distressed at her unwonted emotion. "Veronica," she said, sadly and lovingly, "this pains me. I had no idea of your feeling; no conception of your having suffered so. You are always so quiet and reserved that I thought you had peace within, though your face is so often clouded with apparent discontent. Now I see that your heart is heavy. If I could only show you the way to peace — that is the way to happiness.

The girl said nothing; she only shook her head as if to say: "Peace is not for me," and her eyes shone like fire with her inward excitement.

"Veronica," said Gertrude presently, "to-morrow is Christmas day. Do you remember how when you were little children we always prayed together at night,

and how happy you always were at Christmas, and how gladly you said your little prayer? Will you not pray with me now, my child, as we did in those dear old days?"

The girl turned her face aside and wiped away her tears. "I will, mother," she said, making an effort to control herself, "it will bring back those happy days in memory, and give you a little pleasure."

She folded her hands and began to repeat the Lord's prayer. Gertrude followed reverently. When she reached the words, "Forgive us our trespasses," Veronica hid her face in her hands, and broke into violent sobs.

"No, mother, I must not say it. I cannot forgive him. I cannot forgive Dietrich for having treated you so, and then

run away and hidden himself without writing a single word, to tell you where he is. He must know how you are suffering, and I too. And that Judas! I can never, never forgive him. He led Dietrich astray and deceived him. He has destroyed all our happiness. How can I forgive him? Does n't he deserve our hatred? Can I help wishing him the worst punishment that ever befell a human being?"

Veronica sobbed as if the long-pent-up agony of her heart would never again submit to be restrained. Silently Gertrude sat with folded hands, waiting till the storm was spent. At last she said softly,

"If I felt as you do, my child, I could not bear it at all. It would kill me. But I do not feel so. When my Dieterli was a little child and I had to do everything

for him, before he was old enough to take care of himself, there was much in his character and conduct that made me anxious. He always wanted to be first in everything, and whatever he wished for, that he must have, without delay and without effort on his part. And as he grew older and these qualities strengthened, I often felt that with his headstrong disposition he could never become great and good, without the discipline of a severe school. From the earliest hours of his life, I gave him into God's hands, and prayed for God's care and guidance. And through all these years my constant prayer for my boy has been, 'Lead him where Thou wilt, Oh God, only let him not fall out of Thy hands.' When this heavy trial came, which was almost beyond my

strength to bear, I did not lose my faith that the God to whom I had given him, would not let my Dieterli be lost. If the hard lessons of life have begun for Dietrich, he must learn them thoroughly; and if his sins are to be purged away, he must suffer in the process. And though I suffer too, it is God's will; I have had much schooling in my life, and have learned much and gained much from it. Do not feel so hardly against Dietrich because he has not written to us. Perhaps he has written, and the letter has gone astray. I look for a letter every day, but if he does not write, we may be sure that he is in great trouble, poor boy! He knows how we feel toward him, and if he has gone into evil ways we must pity him the more and pray God to bring him back

into the right path again. As to Jost, I think as you do, that he is to blame for our poor boy's troubles. He led him astray and then played him false. Jost is a poor lost sheep who has wandered far from the fold. He has no one to care for him, no one to lead him back again. He is alone in the world. Should not we pray that he may be shown the wickedness of his ways, that his conscience may be awakened and that he may repent and his soul be saved?"

Veronica had listened attentively to all that Gertrude had said. After a silence she said thoughtfully,

"Mother, are you made happy by this faith in God?"

And without a moment's hesitation came the answer:

"I know of nothing that can make us so happy as this faith — the strong confidence in our hearts that our Father in Heaven orders and watches over our lives, and that everything which happens to us is for our good, if we obey him and hold fast to him. I do not know much, Veronica; I have not read nearly as much as lame Sabina, or as you have, and you understand things far better than I do; but it seems to me that you would have gained more from your reading, if you had tried to find something in the books, which you could use to help you in your trouble, and not merely to find out something new about what other people do and how they live."

"If you learned from these books that our Lord Jesus Christ first taught the les-

son that all men are equal in the sight of God, and that one soul is of as much worth as another before Him, then it must have been told there too, how our Savior brought us the glad tidings that we have a Father in Heaven, who loves His children and who will bless them if they put their trust in Him. Our Savior shows us the way to our Heavenly Father, and will help us to overcome all the difficulties that stand in our path. He speaks to us with a tenderness beyond that of any other friend, and bids us lay our burdens upon Him and He will help us to bear them."

"But mother," said Veronica, looking with a wonder that was almost awe upon the peaceful countenance of the mother, "can you truly say that you have found

peace and happiness, while you have no news from him, and do not know what dreadful tidings any minute may bring you?"

"Yes, Veronica, I can and I do say so," answered Gertrude, and her face even without words would have borne witness to the truth of what she said. "I know that what ever comes to us, comes from God, and is for our good. But Veronica, we must put away all hatred and bitterness from our hearts; these feelings are all evil, and we must ask to be forgiven for them. Shall I go on with the prayer, where you left off, my child? Try to join with me; it will help you, dear."

And Gertrude finished the Lord's prayer.

Veronica sat silent for a time, and then

rose and went to her own room. She could not sleep, but she had no inclination to seek relief for trouble in her sewing, as she had been accustomed to do. Gertrude's words were working in her heart. How often had she said lately in the proud bitterness of her heart, "A fine truth indeed!

> 'Fortune stands ready, full in sight,
> He wins, who knows to grasp it right!'"

And now Gertrude had shown her that the words were true after all, and that she had herself grasped Happiness, the truest Fortune, even in the midst of a deep sorrow, greater even than Veronica's own.

Sleeplessly for Veronica the hours of the night went by; but over and over again the mother's words sounded in her ears, and she strove to quiet with them the trouble and unrest of her heart.

CHAPTER X.

MAN PROPOSES, BUT GOD DISPOSES.

Still no news came from Dietrich. Jost made many attempts to show Veronica how much he wished to win her favor. He often went to meet her, and he gave himself endless trouble to convince her of his attachment. He could not boast that he made himself of any use by going to meet her; for she was always accompanied by Blasi, who marched by her side with a triumphant air as if to say, "Jost can judge for himself who holds the place of honor here!" When Jost joined them, Veronica took care that Blasi should walk

between herself and the intruder, and she neither said a word herself, nor seemed to hear what the others were saying. Jost grew pale with suppressed rage. Whenever at other times he met Blasi anywhere, he threw contemptuous words at him. If occasionally Blasi stepped into the Rehbock for a glass of beer, Jost would cry out,

"Oh ho, she allows it to-night, does she, you donkey of a servant? How will you look when she doesn't want your services any longer, and gives you your dismissal? She is already beginning to soften towards me, but until she comes to me and begs me to hear her, I won't listen to a word, nor pay the slightest attention to her."

Such remarks as these, thrown out be-

fore all the company at the Rehbock were very exasperating to Blasi and several times he seized the big bowl to throw it at the insolent fellow's head. He did not throw it however, for Veronica had charged him to have as little as possible to do with Jost, and especially never to quarrel with him, and Veronica's influence over Blasi grew stronger every day. So he did not throw the bowl, but instead, drained it to the bottom and then left the room.

About this time Blasi began to meet Judith very often on his evening walk. Judith seemed to have some business that took her frequently to Fohrensee. Strange surmises were aroused, among the Fohrensee people; for it was known that she went to visit the cattle-dealer. The two were often seen standing before his house

in the open street, gesticulating vehemently with hands and arms. The people about said,

"Something's in the wind. They're going to be married. To be sure she is cleverer than he, but then he is twenty-five years younger, and that counts for something."

One evening in January, Judith met Blasi as he was coming round the corner of Gertrude's house, where he was always at work till it was time to go for Veronica.

"What makes you go about laughing all the time, and looking as if you had been winning a game?" asked Judith.

"That's exactly what I was going to ask you," retorted Blasi, "What have you got to laugh about?"

"Answer me, and I'll answer you, my lad."

"All right; it 's nothing to be ashamed of. She 'll have me."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Judith "Who? Which one?"

Blasi did not turn round, but pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the house he had just left. "That one," he said.

Judith shouted with laughter.

"Will she have you all three?" she said; "first Dietrich, then Jost, and now you."

"I don't see the joke," said Blasi crossly. "Dietrich has run away; she avoids Jost as if he were a nettle, and who else is there? Who is there for her to call upon if she wants help, hey?"

Judith was still snickering over the news.

"Now it's your turn," said Blasi, "tell me what it is that you're so pleased about."

"It is very much like yours, Blasi; come a little nearer," and she whispered in his ear, "I have him."

"Mercy on us!" cried Blasi. "You will be as rich as a Jew, for the cattle-dealer is worth more than half the people in Fohrensee, all put together."

"I'm not talking about the cattle-dealer."

"Pshaw! whom are you talking about then?"

"Somebody else, and I have him in such a fashion that he will not forget it in a hurry, I tell you!"

As she spoke, Judith made a gesture with her hands as if she were choking some one, who certainly would not escape alive from her clutches.

Blasi shook his head and walked on in silence. But in his inmost mind he thought, "I can't make anything out of her; her head is all in a buzz. But she 's only a woman."

Soon after, they reached the turf-hut, and there they separated. Veronica was not far off; and as she came up Blasi joined her, and they walked quickly along over the crisp, frozen ground. She was more silent than usual, and seemed sunk in thought. In the middle of the wood she stopped suddenly and said,

"Blasi will you do me a great favor?"

"I will do anything in the world for you, Veronica," was the prompt reply, I will jump into the big pond over there, and never come out again, if you want me to."

"You could n't get in now; it is frozen

hard," said the girl, laughing. "I don't want you to do that, but something very different. Do you think you could find out what Jost knows about Dietrich? Perhaps he has told Jost where he is, and where a letter would reach him."

"Yes, but look here, Veronica, are you still thinking about him, all this time?" asked poor Blasi, quite taken aback.

"We will not talk about that," she answered curtly. "To tell the truth, I am very anxious about our mother. She has been very far from well lately, and she says every now and then, 'If I could only see him once more!' as if she felt that she was not going to live much longer. Oh, help me get word to Dietrich if you can, Blasi! do help me!" Veronica's eyes were full of tears, as she raised them

beseechingly to Blasi's face. He was much touched at the sight of her tears: but then a great fear arose in his mind, for he thought, "She is beginning to soften, and it will all turn out just as Jost said." And he determined to prevent it at any cost.

"Don't lose your courage, and I'll try my best! I'll see what I can do!" he said in a very decided tone, and with a most courageous air.

"You are my only friend now," said Veronica; and the words spurred Blasi on to immediate action. He left her in the doorway, and hastened away. He would find out all that Jost could or would tell about Dietrich. He ran across to the Rehbock, where he found Jost sitting with his glass. For if Jost, as he complained,

had to sit and work all the morning, while others did as they pleased, yet he made enough money by his work to allow him to spend all his afternoons at the Rehbock, and remain, drinking one glass after another, all through the evening, and late into the night.

Blasi seated himself by his side, and opened his case very skilfully. He wanted to know about their old friend; where he was now, and whether there was any chance of getting a line sent to him. He did not mind paying for a drink to-night, he said, if Jost would tell him exactly what he knew about Dietrich; they ought to hang together, they three, who had known each other ever since they were children. While Blasi was discoursing in this clever manner, Jost looked squintingly at him,

and when he stopped, he answered scoffingly,

"Oh, so she has come to it at last, has she?" I have been expecting it. You go back and tell her that I can give her all the information she wants; but she must come to me for it, herself, and speak pleasantly to me, as I do to her. Tell her that she will never see him again, as long as she lives; he is too far off. But if she wants to send him a message, she has but to come to me and ask, and I will do her that favor, and she can do me one in return. Go now, Blasi, and tell her this from me. I'll pay for the beer myself."

Blasi felt stunned. Jost had seen through his little game at a glance, and treated it with contempt. How could he carry such a message to Veronica? It

might bring the tears into her eyes again, and that was altogether too painful to see. There was no use in remonstrating with Jost, who sat there smiling scornfully without farther words. For the first time in his life, Blasi left his glass unfinished. He pulled his cap down over his eyes and left the inn. When he entered the widow's cottage, Veronica sat by the table, stitching away at the old mail-bag. She put it down as he came in, and looked up anxiously into his face.

"It's no use; he is just splitting with rage and fury;" and Blasi threw his cap across into the farthest corner of the room. He related the whole conversation and it was plain enough that it was useless for him to try to get anything out of Jost.

She was silent for a time; thinking over Jost's words. "He wants to humble me! I am to go and beseech him to tell me; and I must be friendly and do him a favor. What favor? No, I will have nothing to do with him."

She took up the bag again, stitched up the last hole, and folded the work. Then she said,

"May I ask one thing more of you, Blasi? I hope I shall be able to repay you some day for all your kindness."

"Only speak, Veronica," said Blasi, "I will do anything you ask. If you want me to, I will go to find Dietrich, even if I have to go on foot all the way to Australia."

"Oh, it is no such long journey as that. I am sorry to ask you to do a dis-

agreeable errand, but you see Mother is much disturbed because this mail-bag has not been sent back. She seems to be in a hurry to have everything finished and settled up — as if she had no time to lose." Veronica paused, and the tears that it so troubled Blasi to see, filled her eyes to overflowing. "I promised mother that the bag should be sent home early tomorrow morning, and you see I have no one but you to ask. You can 't leave your work in the daytime and at evening you have to go to meet me ; so there is no time but the very early morning before work hours."

"I will take it if it snows cats and dogs ; but where is it to go ? "

"It is not a pleasant walk, unless you go a long way round by the high-road.

The bag belongs at the post-office at the Valley bridge. Do you think you could get down the steep foot-path in this deep snow? I should feel dreadfully if anything were to happen to you, Blasi."

Blasi was not afraid. He was proud to show Veronica that she might count on his courage, where he had only the forces of nature to contend against, and not the treacherous tricks of Jost.

Veronica had a hard battle with herself that night. "Must I do it?" she asked herself again and again, and each time her heart revolted and she groaned aloud, "I cannot, oh, I cannot!"

Then the image of Gertrude rose before her, pale and suffering, and she heard her heart-rending words, "If I could only see him once more!" Veronica could not sleep, nor could she come to any decision.

Next morning it seemed that Blasi was to be taken at his word, and his boast of being ready for service, no matter what the weather might be, was to be put to the proof; for it stormed furiously and the wind blew so fiercely when he left the house, that he could scarcely make way against it. The half-frozen snow stung and blinded him, but it did not deter him. He forced his way onwards, and though it was still dark and he could not see one step before him, he went on as confidently and unhesitatingly as if there were no chance of his losing his way. And he did not lose it. When day dawned he found himself close to the Valley-bridge, in spite of deep snows and stinging sleet.

"You are early," said the post master, who was busy sorting his letters by lamp-

light. Blasi answered that he had to be at work by sunrise, and having delivered the bag and received the pay for it, he started for home again. He had scarcely gone twenty steps when the post-master called after him,

"Hulloa! Blasi, you can do a neighborly kindness if you will, and it won't cost you anything;" and he handed Blasi a letter.

"It is for the old Miller's widow, over there. Jost fetches her letters himself, usually; it is marked "To be called for," but he'll be glad to be spared the walk such a day as this. You can tell him he need n't come to-day, you know."

Blasi took the letter. The Miller's widow was an old deaf woman, who lived quite alone, in a little, tumble-down cottage, just

off the road, on a lonely hillside. The foot-path that Blasi took, led near her dwelling. The woman was an aunt of Jost's, and had known better days when her husband was alive; but now she had fallen into poverty, and had grown sour and bitter, and would have nothing to do with the rest of the world. Blasi worked his way to her hut, through the deep, pathless snow. As he approached the door, he took the letter from his pocket, and looked at the address.

"Heavens and earth and all the rest of it! It is from Dietrich!" he cried out. "I did n't copy all his work at school for nothing. I know his hand-writing as well as I know anything!"

He talked aloud in his excitement, as he stood hammering away at the door, which

the old woman was not very prompt in opening. At last he opened it himself, and came stamping into the room. The widow was sitting on a bench by the stove, picking wool. She had not heard his knocks, and she stared at him with amazement. He explained how he came by the letter, but she was too deaf to understand him. Then he held the letter close under her eyes, and shouted in her ear,

"Read it! I want to know what's in it. It's from Dietrich."

She pushed the letter away and said sharply,

"It don't belong to me. I never get any letters. Take it away."

Blasi was fairly out of patience.

"That's your name, any way," he said. "I'll read it to you; I want to know what

he says." He tore the letter open and began to read:

"HAMBURG, 14th Jan., 18—

"My Dear Jost:"

Blasi started, but he read on. It was a short letter, and he read it through twice.

"Will you get out?" said the old woman crossly, for Blasi stood as if rooted to the floor. He stuffed the letter back into the torn cover, and went out, but stopped again outside. What should he do? The letter was Jost's. He was afraid of Jost, and he had opened Jost's letter! Presently an idea struck him, and he instantly acted on it. He stuck the envelope together as well as he could, ran through the storm back to the post-office, tossed in the letter quickly, saying, "The old woman says

it 's not for her, and she won't take it," and was off again on his homeward way.

As for Veronica, she had but one thought in her mind all that day. Gertrude was so ill when she went to her bed-side in the morning, that Veronica's heart at once cried out, " It must be done ! " and all day long she kept repeating to herself, " It shall be done to-night."

When Blasi went to meet her that evening, he was so full of his news that he could scarcely wait to greet her, before beginning to tell it ; but he was so startled by her looks that instead, he stopped short, and exclaimed,

" What is the matter ? Are you ill ? Sit down and rest, in the hut, here."

Veronica shook her head; she could not lose a moment, she said, for she was in

a hurry to get home, and was not in the least ill. Then Blasi blurted out his story; he was so eager, that he could scarcely get the words out straight. Veronica listened with breathless attention. Suddenly, such a happy radiance spread over her face, that Blasi stood still and gazed at her.

"Hamburg! did you say Hamburg, Blasi? Was that where the letter came from?" Her eyes danced with joy; Blasi had never seen her look like that before.

"Certainly it was; I am sure of it; I can read Dietrich's writing fast enough," answered Blasi, and he added to himself, "The women-folk are queer creatures. No fellow can understand them. A moment ago she looked all broken-down, and as if she could be blown out with a puff of wind,

and now she looks bright and strong as the sun at noon-day."

"Repeat word for word what you read in the letter, please, Blasi," and he told her all that he could remember. It did not take long. Dietrich said that he had not much to say, but wrote because Jost was the only person in the world who cared anything for him. Perhaps some day his mother would come to feel differently; but since he had brought so much trouble upon her, he could not expect her to forgive him yet. If Veronica was going to marry some one else, he did not want to hear about it. He could not make up his mind to go to Australia as Jost advised; if was too far away; he was almost dead of homesickness even in Hamburg. If they were after him for the man-slaughter, he

thought he could hide well enough there, and perhaps in a few years when the whole thing was forgotten, he could come home again.

If worst came to worst, and he were taken, he should at least get home, if only to be put into the House of Correction. He felt the worst on his mother's account. He wanted Jost to write and tell him about things at home, and it was safest to send to the same address, as he always called for the letters himself.

Veronica hung upon every word that fell from Blasi's lips, and when he had finished, she walked silently by his side, deep in thought. Presently he asked her what he should do if Jost found out that he had opened his letter and hauled him up before a Justice of the Peace for it

Veronica said she believed that Jost would scarcely care to say anything about the letter. She advised Blasi to keep his own counsel, and to behave as usual, in a perfectly unconcerned manner, whenever he met Jost. She would take the rest in hand herself. Blasi was more than willing to leave it all to her; he had entire confidence in her ability to manage the affair.

The letters of all the country round were collected at the central office in Fohrensee, to be forwarded together from there to the nearest city, where they were sorted and distributed. Veronica thought of this, and laid her plans accordingly. The next day as soon as she reached Fohrensee, she went to the post-office, and asked to see the address of a letter which had just been sent in, on its way to

Hamburg. The post-master, who knew her well, did not think the request at all singular, supposing that it had something to do with the school business.

"A letter for Hamburg came in last evening;" said his daughter who was his assistant, "there it lies with the others that came with it."

The postmaster went to the table and found the letter, which he handed to Veronica. "The address is not very nicely written," he said.

The handwriting was either that of a person unused to the pen, or it was purposely disguised. The letter was addressed to a woman of the same name as that of the miller's widow. The name of the street was illegible, but the words "To be called for," were plainly written.

Veronica was convinced that the letter she was in search of lay before her. So Jost had written as she had expected he would do, the day before. He had undoubtedly seen that Dietrich's letter had been opened. Did he write so promptly in order to frighten Dietrich into going farther away? Had he suggested to him a new address now that the old one had been discovered? She felt sure that Jost was trying to prevent anyone but himself from having any communication with Dietrich. There was not a moment to lose. What would she not have given to be able to withhold the letter! But she did not dare. She returned it to the post-master and asked for a piece of paper. Her hand trembled with excitement and her heart beat so loud, that she thought the post-master must hear it.

She wrote the following words:

"Dear Dietrich; your mother is very weak. Come home directly. You have nothing to fear. Veronica."

She enveloped it, and addressed it as Jost had done his, and handed it to the post-master.

"I thank you very much indeed," she said, "will you kindly see that this letter goes by this morning's mail?"

"Yes, yes, I understand; it's a thread-and-needle business," he said laughing, as he threw the letters down on the same pile. "They will travel side by side and reach Hamburg together."

All day Veronica's hand trembled at her work. Outwardly she was tranquil and composed; but within was a storm of conjectures, fears and hopes. What had

Jost written to Dietrich about his mother; what about her? Jost had evidently let him believe that he had killed a man. What reason had Jost for deceiving him and keeping him at a distance? These questions brought the color to Veronica's cheeks as she suspected what the answers might be. Did Jost think that she would marry him if Dietrich did not come back? or were there other reasons why he did not dare to let him come? All sorts of possible solutions flew through Veronica's head, and the conclusion she arrived at frightened her. She did not wish to suspect any one of being a rogue without good reason; yet the evidence seemed in this case to be irresistible. If Dietrich came home, everything would be cleared up. But if he did not come, what then?

Would everything have to be allowed to go on as it was? She would talk it all over with Gertrude this very evening.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOTTO PROVES TRUE.

Veronica for once did not carry out her plans. When she reached home she found Gertrude in a high fever. She spoke to Veronica as if she were still a child, and had just come in from school. Veronica sat quietly down by the bed-side, and did what she could to soothe and refresh her, and when by degrees her mother's mind became more clear, she proposed to her to send for the doctor. But Gertrude did not want the doctor. She had no pain, she said; she was only weak. Veronica sat by her side all night, but of course it was no time to speak of

the letter, and of the excitements of the day. It would not do to arouse hopes that might never be fulfilled, and if Dietrich came, that was enough. All through the long hours of the night, the girl sat thinking over all the hopes and fears and perplexities of her life, while Gertrude lay still and seemed to doze. Only now and then she spoke some kindly words to the children, and Veronica knew that she thought they were both there sitting by her bed-side; again her little ones.

In the morning Gertrude was quite herself again. She would not hear of the doctor's being called, declaring that she needed nothing but a few days' rest. Veronica would not leave her; but sent word to Sabina, to ask her to take her place for a few days, which she knew she could rely

upon her to do gladly, for Sabina was extremely friendly, and very proud of her former pupil, who had been a great credit to her in the position for which she had recommended her.

That day and the next night Mother Gertrude remained quiet, and seemed to sleep most of the time. On the third day, it was evident that she was looking for something, whenever she opened her eyes, although she was not at all delirious; and she frequently exclaimed,

"Oh! if I could only see him once more!"

When the sunset light streamed through the window and illuminated the room, a happy smile lighted up her face. She murmured:

"He half in dreamland seemed to float
Saying 'to-morrow will be fine.'"

After a while she turned towards Veronica and said,

"Veronica, sing it again, with him please; it is beautiful, and I like to hear you sing together: 'To-morrow will be fine.'"

"You have been dreaming, mother; we have not been singing," said the poor girl, wiping away her fast-flowing tears.

It was dark now and all was still. The little night-lamp threw a pale light upon the bed, where the mother lay in a half-sleep. Veronica sat by with big wide-open eyes. Her restless thoughts were busy with many questions. Had he received her letter? Would he come? How? When? and how would the mother be? Suddenly Gertrude rose up in bed with greater strength than she had shown

for many days. "Go! go! Veronica," she said beseechingly, "Open the door for him! He ought not to stand there knocking like a stranger. Show him how glad we are to see him again!"

"No one is knocking, mother; you are only dreaming," said Veronica sadly shaking her head; but the longing in Gertrude's eyes was more than she could resist, and she rose and left the room, thinking to please her by compliance. She heard a step; but then the road ran in front of the house, and it might be any passer-by. She opened the outside door — Dietrich stood before her!

"You summoned me, or I should not have come;" said the young man, half in excuse, and half reassuringly, for Veronica stood dumb and motionless before him. "Will you not shake hands, Veronica?"

She gave him her hand, saying only,

"Come to your mother; she heard your step, and doesn't need to be prepared for you. But you must control yourself; you will find her very much altered."

Dietrich entered the room. His mother was still sitting up in bed, watching the door, in a strained, expectant attitude. She was indeed changed. She looked so small and thin and wasted. Dietrich was completely unmanned at the sight. He sprang to the bedside, threw his arms about her, and between his sobs he cried again and again,

"Forgive me, mother, forgive me! I will never act so again! I will lead a different life! Everything shall be right! You must live to be happy, mother!"

"Thank God that you have come, Die-

trich," said his mother, trembling with weakness and excitement. "I forgave you long ago. How could I have anything against you? But, my dear boy, why did you not write one word, one little word to tell me how you were and where? Did n't you know how unhappy you were making me?"

"What, mother! what do you mean? I wrote three times to you and twice to Veronica; and you sent me back word through Jost that you did not want to hear from me; that the disgrace was too much, and that no one dared to mention my name before Veronica, she was so angry with me. I had to send my letters through Jost, and he gave me the address of his old aunt to make all safe. It was better for you not to know where I was, because

they were hunting for me on account of the man I killed. And you have never got one of my letters; not one?"

His mother could only shake her head in reply. She tried to speak, but she had already gone beyond her strength, and she sank back upon her pillows. Veronica, who had been standing by in silence, started forward.

"I will run for the doctor," she said, "stay with her, Dietrich;" and she darted from the room. He hurried after her. "Let me go," he said, "it is too late for you to be out, and you can take better care of her than I can." He was off; and Veronica returned to the bed-side. He took the shortest road; the one that passed the Rehbock. Loud shouts and cries were sounding from the inn. He

hurried by. Presently he heard his own name called; some one came running after him, shouting:

"Wait, Dietrich, wait!" He turned round and saw Blasi, who had recognized him as he passed the door, and rushed out after him. "Don't run away, Dietrich! Welcome home! Where did you come from? Have you seen her? Don't run away! Listen to me!" Dietrich stopped and shook hands with Blasi, and again started forward. Blasi detained him.

"There 's been something going on that you ought to know about," he continued. "Don't think that I go to the Rehbock every evening, by any means! I heard there was some strange news, and so I went there to-night to hear it, and it was well worth while, I can tell you. The red

fellow is found out! The cattle-dealer accused him of having stolen his money bag. The man denied it; there was a long investigation, and at last they found out that and a great many other things against him. He turns out to be a regular rascal. And when all this had been proved against him, he turned round and accused another man, who, he said, was really at the bottom of everything; but no one knows yet who it is. Don't run so fast; I can't keep up with you. Now you 're out of it all right, Dietrich; but I suppose you know that they tried to make out that you took the money, and that was why you ran away. But I never believed it; I never did, on my honor. Do stand still; it 's all right now, and you need n't run away any more."

"I 'm not going to run away, Blasi, and

I thank you for bringing me this good news. But it 's not all right you know, on account of Marx."

"Marx!" cried Blasi, "what of Marx! it doesn't hurt a man to get a good beating. Marx is as lively as you or I, and still drinks more than enough to quench his thirst, when he can get it."

Dietrich stood still now, and drew a long breath. "Is that true, Blasi, really true? You would n't say it if it were not true? She wrote me that there was nothing to fear; but I didn't understand it. And I can't quite understand now. Jost wrote me that Marx was dead, and that I had better go away as far as I possibly could, because they were searching for me, high and low. I can't make it out. But I must go now for the doctor. Come

and see me to-morrow, Blasi; and we will have a good talk. Now good-night."

Dietrich shook his old comrade by the hand and ran off. But Blasi could not so easily smother all the wonderful things he had to tell, and he called out at the top of his lungs,

"You don't know much of anything yet! I spend the whole day at your house; it 's you that will have to come to me. I am working at your trade; you ought to see! there 's many a fellow that would be glad to do as well as I do!"

But Dietrich had disappeared. It was past midnight, before he reached the doctor's house, and he knocked a good many times in vain. At last a maid came down and opened the door, saying as she did so,

"What a plague it is, that everything

always comes at once! He has been called out once to-night, and has hardly got to bed again. It never rains but it pours!"

"I hope he will be so good as to come now;" said Dietrich, "it is very important or I would not ask him."

The maid knocked at the chamber door. It was some time before the doctor's voice answered from within, "Who 's there?"

"Dietrich from Tannenegg," said the servant.

"He back again? No, I 'm too old and too tired for that. They ought to give him a good beating if they can catch him; it would serve him right."

Dietrich stepped up to the door himself.

"It is not for me, doctor," said he humbly, "it is for my mother; she is very ill

indeed. For God's sake, doctor, come and help her!"

"That 's another thing altogether; she is a brave woman, who has been doing your work for you," said the voice from within the room. Pretty soon the doctor came out, and when Dietrich described his mother's condition, he took some medicines with him and started out.

"I have no horse to use to-night; mine has done a hard day's work and must have his rest. We shall have to go up the hill afoot."

As they crossed the open space in front of the house, he continued,

"I remember once how on this very spot once a little boy stood up in front of me, and when I asked him if he would like some day to take care of a horse,

answered, 'No, I want a horse of my own.' I thought he had a good purpose in view if he would only pursue it the right way. But it does not do to want to begin by being a gentleman. First come work, and service for us all, then mastership may follow. Whoever tries to begin at the end, will end at the beginning; which is not a good nor an agreeable method. Am I right or wrong, Dietrich?"

"You are right, doctor. If one could only look ahead!" answered Dietrich.

"Yes, that would help; but as we cannot, we must trust those who are our friends, and who have gone before us in the right way, and can show us the road; like that noble woman to whom we are now going."

When they entered Gertrude's room

they found her asleep. The doctor sat down by the bedside, watched her awhile, and felt her pulse from time to time. Then he arose and turning to Veronica, he said,

"I can do no good here; take care of her; she deserves all you can do, but the lamp of life burns low, and will soon go out altogether. She has had a hard lot; trouble wears faster than years."

With these words the doctor went to the door. He did not even glance towards Dietrich, who threw himself on his knees by the bedside of his dying mother, sobbing out:

"O God in Heaven, do not let her die! Let her come back! Let her have a little comfort in this world! Punish me as I deserve, but oh! let my mother live!"

Gertrude opened her eyes. She grasped the hand of her sobbing son, which lay upon hers, and held it tightly clasped; while she whispered softly:

"Yes, my Dieterli, pray, pray; if you can pray, all will come right again."

She closed her eyes and never spoke again. The hand that held Dietrich's grew cold. Veronica, who had been standing behind Dietrich weeping silently approached the bedside, took Gertrude's other hand in hers, and said between her sobs:

"Sleep well, dear, good mother! Yes, for you 'tomorrow will be fine';" and she left the room.

Two days later Dietrich followed his mother to her last resting place. There was no need to avoid meeting people now,

for every one knew that the true thief had been discovered. But no hope was left to him in his home. When he returned from the funeral, and went into the house, he knew that he had no right there, for it no longer belonged to him. He went to his room, strapped on his heavy knapsack, and came down stairs. Veronica was alone in the sitting-room. She stood leaning against the window, her eyes fixed on the church-yard beyond, where the mother lay sleeping.

He entered the room. "Veronica, give me your hand once more. I am going," he said, coming towards her.

"Where are you going, Dietrich?" she asked in a voice that was wholly without feeling; and the cold tone seemed to stab the young man's heart as with a knife. "It is all one to her;" he thought.

"I am going out into the world. I am going to work to pay my debts. I have no home; and as there is no one on earth who cares for me, I can bear my burden better anywhere than here."

"Then go, in God's name," said Veronica, and she held out her hand to him. This was too much for Dietrich. He made one struggle for self-control and then broke down completely.

"Can you let me go so coolly, Veronica? not one kindly word for me? If I might stay here with you, I would work day and night like the meanest servant; I would do anything and everything for you. But no! I must go! I could not bear it! How could I stay and see you give yourself to some one else — I who have lost you, — lost you forever!"

The young man threw himself into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and cried like a child.

Veronica was as white as snow. She went to his side, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Dietrich," she said softly, "if you feel in this way, why don't you ask me how I feel, when I think of living on here alone when you have gone; when you have left me perhaps forever?"

Dietrich raised his eyes to hers. A look lay there, a look such as he had dreamed of in his banishment. He sprang to his feet, and seized her hand.

"Veronica, can you love me? can you trust me?"

She did not withdraw her hand, and looked him full in the eyes.

"I have always loved you, Dietrich," she said, "and if I know that you can pray again to God, and promise to live a life acceptable to Him, I can trust you too."

The young man pressed her to his heart. "Is it true, is it possible?" he cried. "Oh Veronica, can it be true?"

But suddenly he started back, and said in a frightened tone,

"No, I dare not. I cannot. Who am I? I am nothing; I have nothing, less than nothing; and I know what you are and how far above me. Jost wrote me that there was no hope for me. I wanted to make you so happy — I meant to get money and provide all sorts of beautiful things for you and to make you the happiest woman in the world. And now! now I am a beggar, and a miserable creature into the bargain."

Veronica shook her head.

"You do not understand what happiness really is, Dietrich. I have been searching for it longer than you have, and you may believe me that it is not what you think. It is not something at a distance, far beyond our reach; we may find it while we are at work. We are not beggars; this house is ours, and we can still live in it. But, Dietrich, we will try to find the way that our mother went; that is the true way to happiness and peace in life and death."

"We will," cried Dietrich, with solemn joy; and as he clasped Veronica again to his heart, there was that in his face and in his voice which assured her that he would never leave her again, and that they would walk in that true way of happiness and peace together.

At this moment Judith burst into the room. When she saw the faces of the two who stood before her, she stood stock still with surprise! She immediately took in the situation.

"So! So! this is something that delights one's very heart!" she cried, and her face beamed with satisfaction. But look out of the window! I came to tell you! You can say good-bye to that rascal forever."

They stepped together to the window which looked out upon the road. Jost was just going by. His hands were bound together, and he was followed by the Constable, who hurried him along. Jost looked up at the window and shrank back at what he saw; but the man drove him on.

"What does it mean?" asked Dietrich and Veronica in the same breath, turning to Judith.

"It is what was bound to come," she explained. "Everything is found out. They seized the red fellow first, after I succeeded in getting it through the cattle-dealer's thick head that he was the man to get hold of. When they had driven the red man into a corner, so that he couldn't lie himself out of it, he turned against Jost, and declared that Jost had planned the whole thing and that he himself had only played second-fiddle. Which can lie the worst, no one can tell, but that they are both reaping what they have sown, is certain enough. And now we're to have a wedding, are we? and our Dietrich is going to settle down into regular home life again. Welcome, neighbors; we will live in friendship together all our days." And Judith shook hands cordially with

them both, and hastened away to spread through the neighborhood the good news of the coming marriage.

It is now ten years since Dietrich and Veronica left the church of Tannenegg where they had been made one, and the blessing had been pronounced upon their united lives. They went first to the little church yard and knelt by the new made grave covered with flowers. With tearful eyes, and with sad regrets in their happy hearts, they said,

"If she could only have lived to see us now!"

Today there is no more beautiful flower-garden in all Tannenegg, than that about Dietrich's pretty white house. Within the house all is so fresh and charming from top to bottom, that one who enters

it finds it difficult to get away again from its hospitable shelter.

Dietrich has built a fine large work-room; and there he sits and works, industrious and happy, or he goes about his outside affairs in a steady business-like manner. Often he has to go to Fohrensee and even farther; for his trade is prosperous beyond competition and his work is recognized far and wide as of unrivalled excellence.

On Veronica's face lies such a sunshine of constant happiness as is good to look upon. She has given up her position in the school at Fohrensee; her place is with her husband and children; but she does not for all that sit with her hands in her lap; her orderly well-kept house, and her blooming well-behaved children bear

witness to her faultless management as well as to her care and industry, and at the great annual Fair in the city, if any one inquires about some wonderfully fine and beautiful embroidery on exhibition, the answer invariably is, "that is the work of Veronica of Tannenegg."

Blasi is Dietrich's permanent assistant. He is constantly about the house, and is known in the family as Uncle Blasi. As soon as the day's work is over, and the evening sets in, his first question is, "Where are our children?" He never speaks of them in any other way; they are his, his joy and pride. He has also a special claim upon them, for he and Cousin Judith are the god-father and god-mother of both.

Blasi's favorite time is Sunday, when

Dietrich goes to walk with his wife, and gives over the house and the children to him. Then he sets upon one knee the chubby little Dieterli and on the other the black eyed Veronica, and they ride there as long as they please, no matter how high the horse has to curvet and prance. And whatever else they want him to do for them, he is ready to do, whatever it may be.

There is only one Sunday pleasure that outweighs the knee-riding with Uncle Blasi, and that is when Veronica takes her little girl in her lap and lets Dieterli press close to her side, as he does only when he is very much excited. Then the mother takes a little picture in her hand, the picture of a red rose. Suddenly the flower opens, and a little verse in golden letters

appears. Every time this opens, it elicits a cry of joy from the children, and they are never tired of seeing the wonder repeated. And Veronica is never tired of repeating it; for the rose and the verse are so interwoven with her life that they recall many memories of joy and sorrow; and she often says to the children, "Some time when you are old enough, I will explain this golden motto to you, and you shall learn it by heart."

When Blasi and Judith are alone together, he likes to talk over old times, and he often reminds her that he had fully made up his mind to marry Veronica himself; and he always winds up with,

"I want you to understand that I would never have given her up to any one else; but an old friend like Dietrich, you know;—

of course it's a very different thing with Dietrich."

And Judith, laughing, answers,

"Yes, yes, Blasi, you're quite right; it's a very different thing with Dietrich."

THE END.